



The VIOLIN
LADY

DAISY RHODES CAMPBELL

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THE VIOLIN LADY

The
Virginia Hammond Stories
By
Daisy Rhodes Campbell



The Fiddling Girl \$1.25
The Proving of Virginia. Net \$1.25
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THE PAGE COMPANY
53 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.



VIRGINIA HAMMOND

THE VIOLIN LADY

BY
DAISY RHODES CAMPBELL

Author of
"THE FIDDLING GIRL," "THE PROVING OF
VIRGINIA," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
JOHN GOSS



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First Impression, February, 1916

TO
Elizabeth Griffith Wyandt
WITH THE LOVE AND BEST WISHES
OF THE WRITER

2134634

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The Violin Lady

CHAPTER I

A PARISIAN PROPOSAL

“**E**LIZABETH JORDAN, that is the tenth discord thou hast made since I came in; thou art in a seething rage; better let it boil over on poor humble me than on the higher-priced Steinway!”

“Virginia Hammond, I always said thou wert a reader of minds; now I am certain of it. If thou canst tell the state of mine underneath my calm exterior thou art a seer.”

Elizabeth slipped from the bench in front of her piano and threw herself into an easy chair near Virginia, who was mending.

“ I always admired girls who blabbed of their love affairs,” she began rather scornfully, when her friend, with a dramatic wave of her needle, interrupted with: “ It will meet with the silence of the grave; proceed.”

“ You know Raoul D’Artois, that tall, slim youth I met several times at your aunt’s? Well, last night, after Madame Hortense’s recital, he followed me into the dining-room, where I went for a drink of Clemence’s delicious punch, for I was desperately thirsty. He waited till I had drunk a pint, I know, and then, to my amazement, he said very abruptly for him, in French: ‘ Mademoiselle, I have tried many times to see you alone, but always you evade, put one off. I seek to call, but you are so busy with your music, or you have no chaperon, or you have a previous engagement; always it is something. Now you shall listen; I am determined.’

“ ‘ You have chosen a strange time and place, Monsieur,’ I said coldly; ‘ any moment guests may come in —’

“‘Name of a name! What do I care if every one hears? I am desperate! I am determined! You shall hear me! I love you! I want you for my wife! Must I then see your parents? I am ignorant of American customs; but we must be married as soon as possible. I am alone in the world; I need consult or obey no one. I can choose for myself. I have declared, over and over again, that never will I marry a bold, independent, ill-bred American girl, but I had not then met you, Mademoiselle. I am mad about you; I think of nothing else. Always I have vowed I would only place my affections judiciously, that is, where money backed the object of my desires; but now I throw discretion to the winds. I am willing to forget family, position, even to overlooking the customary *dôt*, if I may marry you.’

“He paused a second, and I said as coolly as possible, in spite of my rage: ‘You seem to take much for granted, Monsieur. In my country the girl usually decides such matters.

My parents are across the seas, but there is no need to meet them. My father would be desolated to see his only daughter marry a foreigner; and I have declared over and again that I would never marry a Frenchman. We American girls are spoiled for all other men. I fear we would make poor Griseldas. As you say, we are too independent. Then, lastly, which I should have put firstly, I don't love you, and I intend marrying only for love.'

"I wish, Virginia, you could have seen poor Raoul's face. He looked utterly incredulous. He was unable to grasp the fact that I, a nobody, was rejecting a man of family. 'But, Mademoiselle, you do not understand — I fear that in some incomprehensible way I have offended you — but I am offering you a union with the House of D'Artois. While I have no title my name stands very high. You would have everything to gain, nothing to lose with a marriage with me. I can give you entrée to the best social circles; I have a reasonably good inheritance which you, living as you have been

forced to do, will be able to — make both ends meet — is not that your way of putting it? As for love — ah, Mademoiselle, it is your custom to make jokes! I cannot take you seriously.’

“ ‘Of course I cannot force you to swallow distasteful medicine, Monsieur D’Artois; but believe me, great as is the honor you pay me, I could not think of accepting it.’

“ ‘Perhaps Mademoiselle’s hand is already promised —’

“ ‘Yes, it is; to my music for several years. I do not wish or intend to marry for some time; but, if I did, I could not marry you. This is final.’

“ He began to remonstrate, when, to my relief, your aunt and several of her friends came in. I joined them at once and kept out of Raoul’s way. Yet this morning the first thing I received a note from him by messenger. He simply cannot comprehend the astounding fact that a poor, penniless American maid can reject a high-born scion of the House of D’Artois. I could laugh over it if I could forget

his supreme egotism and conceit, his patronizing attitude! oh, I felt like choking his complacent smile down his throat!"

"Elizabeth, you are becoming murderous! Why not pity the poor man? Here he has risen to the heights of sacrifice. He has resolved to be noble, magnanimous, and you spoil the whole episode." Virginia's manner changed. "You see, it is just as I told you. You are in a false position. You insist on living here in Paris as I do, on short rations; and people think your circumstances are like mine. Except for Aunt Henrietta's occasional small social affairs you are a hermit. You refuse to present your letters because you do not wish to go where I cannot. It isn't fair or right. I am fitting myself to make my living by my profession, you —"

"I came here to work with you. Next year I intend to play at home; later I may come here with Mother. Now, Virginia, don't rouse my ire. We've threshed it out before. Is not Raoul enough for one morning? And I never

had such a lesson as M. Étienne gave me, and it is nearly time to beard the lion in his den. I am glad of it. I want something hard. If you only heard what I did last night! Mrs. Kirkland said that Camondreau told a friend of hers, the Baronne de Pontoise, that his new American pupil was a true artist; she had temperament; she would, if she worked as she was doing, make her mark in the world."

"Did Camondreau say that?" Virginia demanded incredulously. "And you kept it till morning! I thought you were my friend. If you heard him find fault with me, you would never believe he thought I would amount to shucks, as Lucinda Dildine would say. I feel now as if I could do anything. Whoopee!" Virginia tossed up the shirt-waist she had been mending in the exuberance of her feelings.

"You should have seen your aunt's face when she told me," Elizabeth went on. "She looked as if she would burst with pride."

" 'I suppose if she is a genius, which I rather doubt, we must sacrifice her to the world,' she

said; 'but I do feel it a terrible drawback to her future not to have her in society. Of course, in my changed circumstances, I was forced to leave her in America; but now that she is here I might do much for her by introducing her to my friends and taking her out with me. But Virginia, though a dear child, always had a will of her own. Once she sets out to do a thing she will succeed or break something.' She sighed so deeply I felt sorry for her."

"Poor Aunt Henrietta!" Virginia said, laughing; "she is always trying to excuse herself for not carrying out her plans in regard to me. It seemed at first that I could hardly bear the disappointment, yet look how it is turning out! I have earned enough for a year in Paris if I live carefully and keep well, and if I need more there is my stepmother and your father ready to loan me money.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.'

I have proved it."

"I sometimes wish that I had a real vocation," Elizabeth declared; "I love my music, but I am no genius."

"Neither am I; it always makes me laugh to hear people call me one. I have talent, yes, but the rest is simply a dogged resolution to work and keep on working. Elizabeth, you are a worker, too, and you know you have talent."

"There's a difference," her friend declared, shaking her head; "and if I don't hurry off this minute you won't see me again. M. Étienne says: 'If a pupil, he ees late, he cannot come to me; he must go elsewhere. My time is not made to waste on laggards,' with accent on the last syllable."

As soon as Elizabeth was gone Virginia put her finished mending away — which she hated — and took out her violin, which she loved. Elizabeth's words had inspired her to fresh effort.

The two friends had come to Paris six months before from Carlisle, Ohio, to study

music. Virginia had spent the three years of college life with her mother's elder sister, a wealthy widow, Mrs. Kirkland. She and her aunt, Mrs. Van Steyne, had disowned and utterly ignored Virginia's lovely mother, Margaret Leighton, on account of her so-called mésalliance with a truck farmer, David Hammond. Later, when alone and fearing blindness, Mrs. Kirkland quite by accident heard Virginia play, and her beauty, talent and charm took her aunt by storm. She begged her to make her home with her, and let her lavish advantages on her to try and atone for all she had done to her mother. After quite a struggle, Virginia yielded. But her aunt, while generous when it took no effort or sacrifice on her part, failed when she lost a third of her large income through a bad investment. Rather than cut down her lavish expenditures appreciably, she decided to fulfill none of her promises as to the girl's future. Virginia, while keenly disappointed, refused to blame her aunt. She insisted that she had already done

so much that it would be ungrateful to feel hard towards her.

When Mrs. Kirkland went to Paris, instead of accompanying her, Virginia went home to the farm to spend the summer with her loved stepmother, her father, and the children, Bob and Janet. In the fall, through the efforts of her violin teacher, Miss Van Buren, she made a tour of several of the Western States under the management of Mr. Stedman and his wife. A very interesting girl, Marcelle Le Duc, was the vocal soloist. The enterprise proved a success, and the two girls earned enough to take them abroad for a year's study, Marcelle going to Berlin. Virginia's dearest friend, who, with her family, had been most kind to her, both during her years at Miss Kemble's and Exeter College, decided to accompany her friend to study the piano.

Though a girl of wealth she insisted on living in Paris as Virginia did. They found two rooms and a tiny kitchenette at a widow's, Madame Victoire, on the Rue de l'Echelles,

within easy walking distance of their teachers' respective studios on the Avenue de l'Opéra. Virginia liked the idea of its being the ladder to success. The girls prepared their own simple breakfasts and suppers, and tried different restaurants for dinners. They were both healthy, normal, unspoiled girls, and enjoyed their new experiences with zest. They often rose early to practice before breakfast so that they might snatch a few hours to see the wonderful sights of Paris. They had been to Versailles; the beautiful cemetery Père la Chaise; Notre Dame; the Louvre, and many other places; and yet after six months they felt they did not half know the marvelous city.

Aunt Henrietta was amazed, and, if the truth were known, not too well pleased to have her niece appear unexpectedly at her perfectly appointed apartment. Mrs. Kirkland always felt a twinge of conscience when she thought of her niece and of her cavalier treatment of her. She also wished Virginia to picture her as living abroad simply and inexpensively,

while, as a matter of fact, she enjoyed many luxuries. She was really attached to Virginia, who had been devoted to her during her months of blindness from cataract, but she was a woman to whom self-denial or any cutting down of pleasure and expenses filled with dismay amounting to horror.

The two girls had not been long at Madame Victoire's when the latter came into their little suite with a mysterious air which excited Virginia's curiosity.

"I came to inform you of new arrivals I am expecting to-morrow to take the two rooms in the rear. The woman is a Madame Bernard. She is from my old home — Rouen. She is young, but she has had much trouble. Her husband, a carpenter, fell when at work and injured himself so that he lived only a few weeks. She had a little baby born soon after. It was found that the muscles of one leg did not grow as they should, so that he was lame. Lately, an uncle of the father, who has some money, decided to send the boy and his mother

here to try the great Doctor de Thèvenau. But ”— and here Madame Victoire lowered her voice perceptibly —“ they are while most excellent people not of a class with the young ladies from America. Yet I cannot refuse the daughter of an old friend. Would you and Miss Jordan object to having them in the house? ”

“ My friend’s father is a merchant and mine is a farmer,” Virginia replied; “ so, you see, we are all working people. I should be glad to know your brave friend and her boy.”

They proved to be very simple-hearted people. The mother was attractive and young to be the mother of a six-year-old child. She was sweet and retiring with pretty manners. But the boy, Adrien, was adorable. He had the face of a cherub and was bright and interesting. He always spoke of Virginia as the Violin Lady and Elizabeth as the Talking Lady, and so in the square on which they lived the two were called by these names. Virginia often even yet found it difficult to believe that

her dream of being a violinist was at last coming true. Camondreau, if severe, was the finest teacher she could have. Miss Van Buren, her American instructor, had been a favorite pupil of his and used his methods. She it was who, next to Dennis Flaherty, a lame Irish fiddler, was the one to awaken Virginia's ambitions and to teach her careful technique. But the rest she declared was not her doing,—it was God-given. She had come across with Marcelle Le Duc, Elizabeth and Virginia, and was now playing to enthusiastic houses in Russia, and receiving much attention socially, so that she had almost made up her mind to stay in St. Petersburg for a time, after her professional engagements were over at Easter.

It was now early December. The girls were looking forward to having Marcelle Le Duc with them for Christmas. Mrs. Kirkland was to spend the holidays at Rome with friends.

Virginia was deep in her practicing after Elizabeth had gone. She stopped to read her

always welcome mail. She tore open her step-mother's letter first to hear the home news. Then she took up an envelope addressed in Marcelle's odd slanting pretty chirography. As she read she gave an exclamation of dismay.

"I find, dear Virginia," it ran, "that I cannot join you and Elizabeth for the holidays. I have the chance to sing at three different houses during Christmas week, and as the people are all very wealthy and offer me most liberal pay, I feel in my circumstances it would be more than foolish to throw it aside. I cannot tell you how disappointed I am; but perhaps I can join you at Easter or later. I am, as you know, dear Virginia, slow at making friends, but I have made a few good ones. Life smiles, a little crookedly it is true, but smiles, and I try to have your optimism and faith, but it is not easy."

"Dear me!" Virginia thought, "that upsets our plans! I suppose it would be better never to make any, but I am always doing it. Poor brave Marcelle! I did so want to see her! It's

most inconvenient to be poor if it isn't any disgrace. I wonder if Marcelle and I shall ever make a large amount of money. I doubt it."

CHAPTER II

FOR MATHILDE

IT was two days before Christmas. The girls had a week's vacation. They celebrated by cutting down their practice of four hours a day to an hour and a half. They gave themselves up to the luxury of resting and sight-seeing.

Virginia was dusting, Elizabeth washing the few breakfast dishes in the tiny kitchenette. They talked back and forth as they worked. "It lightens our labors, just as singing cheered the overworked galley slaves," Elizabeth said.

"How thankful I am that Aunt Henrietta is in Rome and cannot see our back room," Virginia exclaimed. "It is the tragedy of poverty that I must now and then do the family wash. The windows don't need curtains with my handkerchiefs drying on their smooth faces,

and my two shirt-waists and hose are draping the chairs. I have heard her say that of all common things it is the worst to daub wet handkerchiefs on window-panes; and she spoke of some people in Carlisle as ‘the kind that wash their linen in the bath-tub’ as if that — not their morals — settled the question forever of their respectability. Ah, here is Nannette with Miss Jordan’s laundry.”

Virginia was opening the door to admit a smiling, stout woman carrying a basket.

“It is a sunny day, Mademoiselle; the good God sends us many to cheer the hearts of us washerwomen. We have much to thank Him for this Christmas time. Never have we had such good luck as this year. Pierre has not had a sick day, and his mother, who lives with us, is well and hearty, though nearing eighty; and our eldest Maria has a place in a fine family. But alas! others are not so fortunate! Here, in the same house with us, just yesterday a terrible thing happened — ah, it was most terrible! — Mathilde Dupin’s little Dacie was

burned. She found a match on the floor, and when it went off it caught the little one's skirts. Poor Mathilde put it out, but not till the child was badly burned, and her own right hand is of a redness to her elbow. They are both at the hospital. I and my neighbors care for the two older children, but Mathilde is a widow or worse, for her husband, a worthless baggage, ran off and left his family — too lazy to work. Mathilde is never idle; how can she be with three growing children always empty to the heels, let alone clothes and rent? I fear she can't use her hand soon, and what she is to do "— Nannette, whose breath often failed her, now gave out, and she paused to regain it. Elizabeth was standing, purse in hand. She paid her laundry bill, then pressed some money in the woman's hand. "For Mathilde," she said, "for a merry Christmas!"

"But it is of a muchness, so many francs!" Nannette exclaimed in a tone of awe. "The good God certainly sent me to Mademoiselle. I cried hard at breakfast because we can do

so little. Father Antoine tells me always that I haven't faith." She rose to go.

"And I, too, will send her something later," promised Virginia, as the woman took leave.

No sooner was she gone than Virginia turned eagerly to Elizabeth. "I must help, and the only way is to earn. It came home to me in a flash, while Nannette was talking, how to do it. If only you will help!" She looked doubtfully at her friend.

"Of course I shall; speak and thy slave obeys thy behest."

"It is this." Virginia threw down her duster in her eagerness. "I will start out with my violin and play on the street, in cafés, anywhere, and you"—she faltered for a moment—"will collect the money for me."

But Elizabeth did not hesitate. She danced about the room like the child she was.

"It is a godsend; here we are dull and hard-working, with a monotonous existence stretching out before us. Now, we shall live. Where? when? which?"

“There’s nothing like the present,” Virginia declared. “Let us wear these working dresses, and you borrow that shabby Noah’s ark dolman of Madame Victoire and I shall get Adrien to loan me his mother’s cape she wears for common — she has gone to market in her best. Let us tie our heads up in our silk scarfs. I wish they were not quite so new. Come, I must get to work. You gave ten dollars. I may give as much, who knows? Mathilde’s case is a judgment on me for joking over my poverty.”

“I might have given more, but I have set aside some for the church thank offering Christmas morning, and for other things. But later I may do more. Father is always so generous, and I’m expecting an extra check for my Christmas. Oh, I do miss sending the dear little packages, and selecting gifts for the home people!” Elizabeth gave a sigh of regret.

Virginia plunged into her preparations. She could not reply for the lump in her throat. She was struggling with a wave of homesick-

ness and welcomed the present adventure with ardor. She and Elizabeth had had their pictures taken on postcards and sent them in different poses far and near for Christmas greetings. They had written long letters home, timing them to arrive the day before Christmas. The two slipped quietly out of the house, hoping they might meet no one they knew.

"I don't believe any one would know us anyhow," Elizabeth declared confidently. "You look so common, Virginia; even Aunt Henrietta would not recognize you as a Leighton."

"Don't flatter yourself you look any better," retorted Virginia. She carried her violin in her case, and Elizabeth carried a small basket. They walked down the Avenue de l'Opéra outwardly bold in their disguise. A crowd was gathering at a corner. They parted to allow an automobile to make way.

"An accident," said a man near the girls.

"Come, let us reach them before they disband," Elizabeth urged.

The moment they came to the edge of the group already turning away as some one had evidently been carried off, Virginia was tuning her instrument. Then she played all the simple American airs she knew. The people lingered, more came up. Elizabeth passed her basket.

As they went on Virginia asked breathlessly: "Did we get much?"

"Three francs, a few sous; riches don't come this way," the treasurer replied sadly. "Virginia, I dare you to go into the Hotel Bellvue. Here it is. We can only be put out."

A moment later the two found themselves in the hotel corridor. With hands that trembled Virginia played. A hotel employee frowned at them and evidently went off to inform higher powers. But as the playing proceeded the corridor filled. Virginia, thinking of Mathilde, forgot her fear and played tunes both classical and rollicking. As she finally put up her violin there was wild applause and

cries of bravo! Elizabeth, her heart beating fast, passed the basket. It beat faster at the comments of some of the men. "A pretty demoiselle, *sacre cœur!*" "Such eyes are too bright for sadness!" "Come, little one, take a *pour-boire*. It will put heart into thee."

At last they were out on the street.

"I confess I'm scared," Elizabeth declared. "I suppose it's the French way, but I hate it. I feel . . . oh, disgraced!"

For once Virginia was not sympathetic. The craving for gold had gone to her brain. She had visions of Mathilde's relief when she should send her the money which meant so much to her and her family. Nothing else mattered.

"Just let us try the Café de Paris," she begged.

But here they were roughly ordered off. "The Rue de Petits Champs may be better," pleaded Virginia. She was white and tired but indignant. "I shan't be downed," she declared. "I will be heard." Elizabeth, won-

dering, followed her lead. Once on the Petits Champs, Virginia played. A crowd gathered, but only a few sous repaid her zeal.

"Let us take an omnibus to the Boulevard des Capucines," begged Elizabeth. "I am ready to drop. I am sure we shall do better there. I shall gladly pay the fares."

Once on the Boulevard they passed the Café de la Paix. "Come, I shall try here," said Virginia decisively. She passed in, followed with docility by Elizabeth. With a brave front but sinking heart Virginia played. The girls kept near the door. There were many at the tables. Gradually one by one paused in their eating to listen.

"Good! that is no street player. I've heard worse on the stage. Camondreau ought to hear that," were some of the comments. Virginia played Bach's "G String," the "Lieberstraume," then her own little composition "The Thrush's Wooing," tender, appealing. As she stopped there was applause. Under cover of it Virginia spoke urgently to Elizabeth. "I

heard you singing 'The Suwanee River' this morning. Sing it now."

Elizabeth tried to protest, but Virginia, with the air of a general, was playing the prelude. The girl had had a good voice, a little above the ordinary, but she had had but little training and never attempted vocal music.

"It's do or die," she thought, and found herself scared as she never had been before, singing the familiar song, Virginia joining in the chorus with her alto. The applause was hardly over when Elizabeth, with scarlet cheeks, carried the basket. Some were respectful, others jocular, but most of them gave coins with a will. The girls slipped out.

"That was a success, but it's not ten dollars yet," Virginia observed.

"I haven't counted it carefully; I am afraid in such public places, but it is about that. Virginia, I don't know you to-day. I always said you had will, but heaven deliver me from it after this experience. I believe you could even manage Raoul!"

Virginia was about to reply when a voice directly back of them sent the blood to her head. "Not so fast, my charming demoiselles; I know you are hungry; let my friend and me treat you to a dainty lunch," it said in French.

Neither girl turned, but kept on, heads erect. With a dexterous movement two men whirled directly in front of them. One was of middle age, well-dressed, but showing dissipation in his bloated face; the other younger and more attractive.

"Let us pass, gentlemen, or we will call the gendarmes. We are doing you no harm." Virginia spoke in her most dignified manner.

"Now don't let us lose time," the younger man urged with a laugh. "You, Mademoiselle, play for others, play for us. We will pay you well. Life is too short to act the prude even for a few moments. Let us be merry for to-morrow we die."

The girls could not pass without a struggle. They paused. As the young fellow talked, Elizabeth looked wildly about for help. Sud-



“ VIRGINIA SPOKE IN HER MOST DIGNIFIED MANNER ”

denly she jumped to one side and caught the arm of a tall, distinguished-looking man.

“Oh, Doctor de Thèvenau!” she cried, “I am Miss Jordan; you remember me at the hospital perhaps with Adrien Bernard? My friend and I are in trouble.”

The great surgeon, known through the city for his skill and goodness, glanced swiftly at the little group. Then stepping towards them he said courteously: “Mademoiselle, come with me; my car is a block away. Pardon, I hope I have not kept you waiting.”

At his first words the men with a muttered apology vanished as if by magic. Virginia had all she could do to keep from breaking down, the relief was so great. The three walked on in silence to the big touring car.

“Jacques,” the doctor spoke to the chauffeur, “I shall drive myself; meet me at the hospital.”

Once in, he turned to the two girls in the tonneau.

“Now tell me all about it,” he demanded.

"It was all my fault," Virginia began, feeling all at once very small and young. She lost no time in details for well she knew that moments were precious to the man before her. The doctor listened attentively, his keen eyes taking in meanwhile the shabby dress, the pale, scared faces. Never would he have recognized the *chic* young women who came to the hospital with Adrien and his mother twice a week, the latter being too timid to go alone.

At the close, he asked for their address and they were off.

Elizabeth caught Virginia's cold' hand in hers. They said nothing. The adventure which a few hours ago had seemed exciting and meritorious now looked flat and foolish. What must the great man on the front seat think of them? Merely another prank set down to the credit of those wild, free Americans, a nation of shopkeepers, a country of savages.

They drove up before Madame Victoire's, much to that lady's amazement as she took in

the gratifying spectacle from a discreet background.

“ I hope that Thérèse Crepin sees who brings my lodgers home,” she thought; “ she who says they are of the people, the cat!”

As they slowed down the doctor faced them again and said gravely: “ Such experiences may be *comme il faut* in your country, mes demoiselles, I do not know; but I do know they will not pass in mine. Thank your patron saint that I was passing when I did. ’Tis said that angels watch over fools and children; but do not repeat it.” Then, his voice changing to a brisk, businesslike tone, he went on: “ But there is a rose-colored lining to many a cloud. I have been up to my heels in work and have not had time to prepare a little treat for my convalescent children Christmas Eve. It must be simple and not too long. You two can help me out if you will. Play at the hospital tomorrow at six and I shall be glad to add to Mathilde’s fund. Now,” as Virginia tried to speak, “ I know you would gladly help without

price, but that would not be fair to Mathilde. Never rob Peter to pay Paul. I shall bring my little girl Heloise. She is home for a fortnight from the convent; a spoiled, motherless child, who never thinks of others because everybody thinks of her. Yes, I shall bring her. Will you put up with her?"

Then, as they eagerly assented, he interrupted them to say: "The car will be here for you, and the little boy and his mother — she will do for chaperon." He smiled ever so little, and, touching his hat, he started his car and was gone.

The girls hurried into the house hoping to escape the sharp eyes of Madame Victoire. But there she stood near their rooms, and, as she looked, her eyes stared in mingled amazement and incredulity.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she exclaimed, "to be out with monsieur le docteur in clothes like the daughters of a washerwoman!"

"They wouldn't wear them on the street," Virginia said gravely; while Elizabeth added:

“Just a little American masquerade to celebrate the season, Madame.”

Madame's face cleared. These Americans did such strange things. She had heard that in their finest cities Indians walked the streets with hardly any clothes on, and most of the houses were of marble. Yet the young ladies were chic and generous — yes, and they had manners that were pleasant, not like French ladies of rank quite, yet they were of a niceness not to be met with every day.

“Elizabeth,” said Virginia, as soon as they were in their rooms, “how do you feel?”

“About the size of a thimble.”

“Just think! we've been here six months and never had an impertinent or familiar thing done to us by a man. Of course we have been very prudent; but, after all, we would not have had this experience if we had not seemed poor and friendless. Doesn't it seem dreadful that the more one is down in the world there are men who will take advantage of it? Well, we have learned our little lesson as to Paris. I shall

never forget that older man's horrid face! If you hadn't seen the doctor!" Virginia shuddered.

"Of course we could have won out," Elizabeth said confidently, "but the publicity would have been horrible. Well, we sinned through ignorance; do let us forget it."

"Do you realize that we haven't had a bite to eat since our early breakfast?" Virginia asked. "Don't let us go out for our dinner this evening. I have enough here for a good lunch. Then early to bed, for I never was more tired."

The next evening Virginia, Elizabeth, Madame Bernard and Adrien entered a large and pleasant room at the Hotel Dieu. It was half full of children; some in wheel chairs, some on couches, a few able to walk a little. The doctor and several nurses were present. Elizabeth played Ludovic's, "Joyous Bird," D'Oro's "Amusette" and "A Fairy Tale," also "Tam o' Shanter." Virginia gave a medley of the world's most popular airs; the "Swan Song,"

and some of her old Irish fiddler's dance music. The children applauded and laughed delightedly. Then a simple supper was served, and, at its close, Virginia began in a sprightly manner telling a story.

"There was once a boy who sang"—then she and Elizabeth played "Yankee Doodle," and eager voices plainly American called out shrilly the name; "he was going to see a girl whose name was"—here the two played "Annie Laurie," and one guessed the name; "then he met a French boy who sang"—here they played "The Marseillaise," a chorus of replies. The rest of the airs were French, and most of them somebody guessed. Virginia was careful to heed the doctor's warning to be brief. As she ended, the nurses carrying small baskets distributed simple gifts and an orange to each child. Elizabeth and Virginia talked to the happy little ones. Then a pretty chime of bells rang as a signal for bed and they were all hurried off, laughing, tired, joyous. It was not until then that the doctor brought forward

a slender sixteen-year-old girl whom he introduced as "my daughter, Heloise."

"I wish I might play like you," she said at once to Virginia. "I never heard violin playing I liked as much. But it must take a lot of hard work, and I hate work. My father says you and your friend are here all alone and do as well when you are not watched as if you were. Are all American girls like that? My father told me about Mathilde and how you want to help her. I don't like her class. They are so uninteresting. Luise de Bonaventure — her father is a comte — says that such people do not feel as we do. She says that the lower classes are born to serve the upper."

"What is my girl telling you?" Doctor de Thèvenau's voice broke in on his daughter's views, and Virginia thought he looked anxious, though he laughed as he spoke.

They chatted a few moments; then the doctor slipped into Elizabeth's handbag some money. "I am under obligations to you both; it was, thanks to you and Mademoiselle the

Violin Lady, a big success; not too much, just enough. The youngsters will talk of it all tomorrow."

Adrien was wide awake and excited. His uncle had sent him a new blue suit, and he had a picture-book and wonderful top from the basket.

"I never went to a real party before," he said, in his sweet high voice; "and I never rode in an automobile in all my life." It seemed to him, as they rolled over the smooth streets, that it was a fairy chariot, and he wished it might never come to an end. He could not even talk. He lay back and enjoyed it to the full. His mother looked younger and prettier than ever. She was happier than she had been since her husband's death. Every one was so kind to her boy, and the doctor had just told her there was every hope that he would in time walk as well as any one. Virginia and Elizabeth were happy because with the twenty dollars from the doctor Mathilde's Christmas gift had swelled to thirty-five dollars. And the

next day was Christmas, and even if they were in a strange land far away from loved ones, Christmas never could be an unhappy or dull day. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord."

CHAPTER III

HOLIDAY TIME

THE girls were wakened next morning by Adrien's voice outside their door.

"A Merry Christmas to the Violin Lady and the Talking Lady," he cried. They called back, but by the time Elizabeth had opened the door they could hear his crutch flying over the bare floor.

Fastened to the knob was a bunch of scarlet cannas and ferns.

"The dear child! They've gone without something to give us that!" cried Virginia. "We will have breakfast at once to get to the half-past eight service. I bought muffins of Lemaire, and they only have to be warmed, and do let us have coffee for Christmas; and, best of all, Adrien's flowers."

"I don't know about that," Elizabeth dis-

sented. "I'm too hungry for smells to nourish me!"

"Merry Christmas!" cried Virginia. "We forget everything when we get to talking."

The little round table looked very dainty and pretty with fresh linen, the few silver pieces the girls had brought from home, the cheap but pretty blue ware and Adrien's flowers. At each place was a mysterious ribbon-tied bundle.

After grace, which they always said standing, they opened the packages.

Virginia's bundle contained two pairs of long gloves she needed and a pretty piece of neckwear.

When Elizabeth opened hers she gave a gasp of surprise.

"Virginia Hammond, when in the world did you ever do this?"

"When you took your lessons; and twice you nearly caught me."

"This" was a pretty white apron, neckwear and a hand-made handkerchief.

"I couldn't buy much, and I heard you say

your stock was low so I tried to put in small stitches, and anyhow they're all big wishes for you, 'Lizbeth."

There was a choke in the throats of both for their hearts were over the sea.

"Don't let the muffins get cold," Virginia laughed a queer little laugh. "I was so worried over my shabby gloves, but you always fill the breach, 'Lizbeth."

"Not half as often as I want to, if you only wouldn't be so independent!"

They had to hurry to get off, but first they threw over the transom in the room down the hall the toys for Adrien and a small package for Madame Bernard. They had joined forces in getting a pretty picture for Madame Victoire. This they put inside her door with a Christmas card. Then off to the American Episcopal Church on the Rue de l'Alma. The church was trimmed for the occasion; the beautiful service and music brought healing and comfort to the two American girls with memories of the home Christmas so different

from this one. There was no sermon till the eleven o'clock service. They met a few people they knew, and the rector, Mr. Ellsworth, talked with them so cordially it warmed their hearts. A friend of Aunt Henrietta's, Mrs. Addison Brown, took them home in her car.

"They make so much more of New Year's than of Christmas here," Elizabeth observed as they went to their rooms; "and with us it is just the opposite. I am so glad that I was brought up to keep Christmas. In spite of the abuse of it, and all that is written and said, I would not have it one bit less important; then our church keeps it with worship and the Catholics do — I wonder why all churches do not. Oh, Virginia, look!"

There, on the table in the front room, was their mail. They had been greatly disappointed that nothing had come the day before.

They threw off their wraps and with eager hands opened the letters.

From Elizabeth's home letter fell a big check and from Virginia's smaller ones from Ma and

her father. There were excellent photographs of Bob and Janet. Ma wrote of the homely details of their every-day simple life; of Lucinda Dildine's new hat and necklace of blue glass beads — Lucinda was the Hammonds' all around steady helper and a character. Of the children's doings, of the Flahertys, Virginia's devoted Irish friends, of her father's new horse, of her sister, Miss Marshall's, promised visit over Christmas. Virginia devoured the pages with an appetite that was insatiable. There were short letters to each from Alan Kingsbury, the friend of Virginia's earliest recollections. He was employed by Elizabeth's father in his immense department store and was rising rapidly. He inclosed photographs of himself. "Father writes that Alan is proving a wonderful business man," Elizabeth said. "What a fortunate thing that through you he came when he did!"

"I don't know: I never quite approved of my share in that deal," Virginia declared, "if it did bring happy results." She was still not

quite satisfied that it was through her betrayal of Theodore's plans to his mother that he had gone to Mr. Charles Black's Wisconsin ranch where Alan was trying to force himself to become a farmer and Alan had taken Thee's place in the store.

There was also a letter from Theodore which ended in these words: "I know the ban I'm under, Virginia, not to mention a certain subject; but you might let a fellow off Christmas time. Don't you ever feel a wavering of that strong self-reliant mind of yours? Oh, if you only were the dependable vine clinging to the oak, and I were the oak! (You didn't say I couldn't call myself an oak.) Don't you ever feel homesick and longing for old friends? Doesn't your beloved violin ever pall on you? I don't believe any of these things ever happen or will happen, but oh, how I pray they may, because then you — there, I didn't write it."

"I'm glad he doesn't see into my heart this blessed day," thought Virginia. "I don't

want love — that kind — but oh, I do want home and old friends!”

Theodore, now on a ranch of his own next to the Blacks, was — or as Virginia insisted, fancied that he was — in love with Virginia who was wedded to her violin and could not understand why girls and boys wanted to fall in love and marry when life had so much else.

“Thee writes,” Elizabeth said suddenly, “so much about the Blacks. They certainly have been lovely to him. He is to spend Christmas with them. He seems to admire Genevieve as much as ever. I am always expecting the announcement of their engagement.”

“What of Alan? We used to think he was very strong in that direction. I am sure he never let up on his praise of all her virtues.”

“Yes, he likes her immensely. I am afraid really, Virginia, that some day soon it may come to a crisis. Miss Black can’t marry them both. One must be taken and the other left, and if Thee were left it would nearly kill him, poor boy! He has always had the things he

wanted most. She must be a charming creature to attract two men like Alan and Thee when they know such girls as — ahem! — well, you and me, for instance.”

There was a rap at the door and there stood Madame Victoire in her Sunday best, smiling and beneficent, in her hands a generous bowl of delicious salad.

“A merry Christmas for your lunch,” she beamed upon them. “I am going out. A bright day, young ladies.”

“Oh, let us take the Bernards the salad I made and divide our cake and nuts with them.” said Virginia after she left.

“Do!” agreed Elizabeth as Virginia sped off on her errand.

Considerably brightened by their letters the girls enjoyed their luncheon. At three they were going to the Bois to see the glass of fashion and the mold of form with two American girls they had met at Mrs. Kirkland’s and who invited them to go with them in their cousin’s automobile.

It was a gay sight — the machines, a few carriages, filled with women in beautiful toilettes. The girls, Hildreth and Marion Trask from Baltimore, were agreeable, pleasant company, and their cousin, a young married woman, Mrs. Archer, was animated and full of life. As they paused to watch the passing show several young men friends of the Archers joined them and were introduced. It was a pleasant diversion.

On their return an immense box addressed to Miss Elizabeth Jordan greeted their vision. Opening it Elizabeth exclaimed with incredulous scorn: "Virginia Hammond! It is from Raoul! He actually thinks I'm coquetting with him! He is impossible. Read that!" Elizabeth handed her friend a card on which was written in a fine hand: "I am still awaiting your pleasure, Mademoiselle; but even my patience is not without finality.— R."

Virginia laughed. "In spite of his aristocracy, Monsieur's skin is of a thickness; but

courage, mon enfant, all things come to an end!"

"I shall send it back!"

"No!" cried Virginia, shamelessly. "He owes you that much for all he has made you suffer. And I . . . I adore bonbons!"

It ended in their attacking the candy, which was truly enchanting, Virginia declared.

In the midst of their feast a young girl with a pleasant, homely face appeared.

"I am Maria Dupin," she announced. "Nannette Capon sent me. She said you wished to send something to my mother. I could not come earlier as we had company at the house, and I am just off now."

Virginia ran into the next room for the money, which she had put in a small leather bag.

"Hadn't you better conceal it? It is money, and you may be robbed," she said, smiling.

But Maria took it seriously. "I shall run no risks," she said, as she slipped down her neat stocking and put the bag in it.

“There! I defy any thief to get that.” She made a curtsy. “I hope many blessings may come to both your highnesses. My mother cried for joy over the money Nannette brought; she says she never knew such kindness. She is sure that God himself sent such wonderfully big hearts from that big country, America! here to help her in her trouble.”

The girls filled a box with part of Raoul’s candy and their own nuts, and sent her off in a glow of happiness.

“Now, Virginia,” Elizabeth said; “it is time to dress for dinner. You promised me that I should have my way about it. We are to go in full dress.”

Virginia opened her eyes. “How mysterious and thrilling!”

“The car will be here at seven, Mademoiselle.”

“Such elegance! Why spoil my taste for the simple life?” Virginia demanded.

The two were ready to the minute, Virginia in a black lace over burnt orange silk, her neck

and arms bare, Elizabeth in a pale blue silk trimmed in white lace. Both wore long white gloves, and Virginia the fur-lined wrap her aunt had given her in the days of her luxury.

Just as the car drove up, Madame Victoire in her best black silk with new lace neck fixings, joined the girls.

"Behold our chaperon," murmured Elizabeth.

Virginia fairly gasped as she heard her order "To Voisin's." It was one of the finest and most fashionable of the city restaurants. As they entered the beautiful rooms they were already well filled with women and men in evening dress.

No sooner were they seated when a tall handsome man came to Virginia.

"This is Miss Hammond, I believe," he said in English. "I am Mr. Archer; the Trask girls and my wife with a small party are here, and they wonder if it might not be arranged to have you join us, as 'the more the merrier,' if you are willing."

It was the work of a few moments to find a larger table. The girls were introduced to a pretty French girl, Mademoiselle Frèdin, two American men, and two Frenchmen. They had a merry dinner. The music was inspiring; the company gay and full of fun, the supper a chef's dream. Madame Victoire, smiling, gracious, but not talkative, appeared very creditably. She was, to put it in plain American, having the time of her life and could hardly wait for next day to tell some of her cronies of this wonderful ending to her Christmas day.

The rest of the week passed happily if uneventfully. The girls read some new novels, went out sight-seeing, wrote letters and saw a few friends.

Mrs. Archer invited Virginia and Elizabeth to dinner on New Year's day and this would end their playtime.

They looked forward to the Archer dinner with delightful anticipations. Once Virginia would have taken it as a matter of course; but

now it was a novelty, and some one has said that novelty spells enchantment.

The evening came and the girls were as eager as children. Virginia after some deliberation decided upon her yellow silk, which had been remodeled with black velvet and some cream lace. Elizabeth declared it was prettier than when new. Elizabeth wore a soft white silk with girdle and trimmings of sea-green. The girls were having a rather heated discussion because Virginia insisted on dividing with Elizabeth the expense of a taxi, when the dispute was ended by Mrs. Archer telephoning that she would send for them and take them home.

Madame Victoire and the Bernards came in to inspect them and their toilets and wish them Godspeed.

"The Violin Lady's necklace is like big tear-drops strung together," Adrien observed. It was one of Aunt Henrietta's former gifts of selected baroque pearls with squares of oddly designed dull silver.

Adrien was hugging a good-sized Teddy Bear the girls had given him Christmas.

"I wonder," said the boy, looking from one to the other, "whether the Prince will choose the Talking Lady or the Violin Lady."

"We're not going to meet royalty," laughed Elizabeth.

"In the fairy tales there are princes at all parties; and they choose the prettiest. But when both are so pretty what will happen?"

"Adrien," said Virginia, "you'll be a diplomat or a strategist some day," as she gave him and the bear a hug.

"No, I'm going to be a boy always," Adrien maintained, stoutly.

"Mademoiselle Hammond's dress is of a style unique, Mademoiselle Jordan's simple and charming," Madame Victoire pronounced with her expansive smile. There were a dozen guests at the dinner. The first one that met their eyes was Raoul the Aristocrat, as they had dubbed him; while seated by his side was

Alec Forbes, a former University man whom they knew well when they were at Exeter. The surprise was mutual.

"I pictured you at work at home, not idling in demoralizing Paris," Elizabeth greeted him.

"Why work when one can get enough to keep one from starving tramping? It's certainly more interesting," retorted the other.

As they chatted, Virginia could not resist stealing a glance at Raoul, and was startled to notice a look bent on Elizabeth and Alec so really malevolent that it filled her with dismay amounting to fear.

"I wish he had never fancied Elizabeth!" she thought. "His is a small, narrow nature which with his colossal conceit may make him an enemy not to be treated lightly."

The Archers lived near Aunt Henrietta's apartment in the American colony. Of course there were the Trask girls, and a sweet-faced English girl in a dark blue dress trimmed in two shades of heliotrope which Elizabeth declared gave her the toothache.

A Monsieur Descartes took Virginia out to dinner; young Forbes, Elizabeth.

Mrs. Archer was a Carlisle woman, and she had many questions to ask Alec, as he had been visiting there.

"Did you see anything of Alan Kingsbury?" asked Elizabeth, when the talk was less general.

"Indeed I did; Alan and I are quite chummy. He is a straight, fine fellow. Your father jokes him about his interests in the West. You know his trick of blushing? Well, he hasn't outgrown it. I fancy that black is his favorite color. He showed me her picture. She isn't a beauty, but her face is most attractive and strong."

Virginia, who was on his right, could not but hear the last.

"Thee must marry Genevieve," she found herself declaring to herself; "they are suited to each other, and only then will Thee get away from this silly idea of fancying me. Alan isn't suited to her. Oh, dear! life is a mix-up. I

wish that I might play Fate for a few months; would I make or mar?"

As she turned to reply to Raoul D'Artois opposite, Mrs. Archer asked Elizabeth: "It must have been a keen disappointment to your father, Miss Jordan, to have your brother choose ranching instead of carrying on his own business?"

"Yes, it was; but he has been fortunate in having an old friend of Miss Hammond's to take his place, Mr. Kingsbury. My brother loves ranch life and could never have made a success of business, while his substitute is a born merchant. Father is delighted with him."

Mrs. Archer looked at her rather curiously, Virginia thought; but she was obliged to talk to Monsieur Descartes who interested her. He asked her all kinds of questions concerning America about which he seemed to have the strangest ideas.

"Is it true, Mademoiselle, that you carry your democracy so far that you meet your

peasants and middle-class socially as your equals? Do your servants eat at the same table with the mistress' family as I hear? Do you attend college with your brothers and share their athletics as men do? Do the young ladies of the upper class often do all the menial tasks in a household? Do not think me tiresome, but I am greatly interested in all I hear of America."

The hostess was giving the signal to rise, so Virginia said earnestly if hurriedly: "I believe it would almost repay you to go to the other side. It is so much better to see and hear for yourself than to trust to others' statements."

"Just what I am contemplating; my father has offered to send me on a little business errand, and he wants me to see your big forests, especially one called the Yellowstone Park. Do you live very near it?"

"No, but it's worth the journey to see it."

"Is it very far from Boston?"

"Only two thousand miles, more or less; of

course we don't think much of that little distance over there."

He was about to reply when Mr. Archer said: "There is barely time for you gentlemen to join me in the smoking-room before going to the theater. We have a friend whom we think has produced a very clever little play, 'The Maid of Trieste,' which is to be produced to-night for the first time at the Gymnase. Mrs. Archer wishes to take the party."

Virginia, who stood near Elizabeth, could not resist giving her arm a squeeze, she was so delighted.

The play proved a charming one well acted. They had a little supper later at the Glacier Neapolitain noted for its ices.

It was considerably after midnight when the girls were set down at their door by the Archers.

"Dear me," Virginia exclaimed, as the two entered their plain little rooms, "I feel like Cinderella! Hasn't it been a lovely evening, 'Lizbeth? Confess you are repenting of your

Spartan resolution to live like a poor working girl."

"You must think me a quitter," Elizabeth declared, but her voice seemed to Virginia a trifle less decided than usual.

"Virginia," she turned impulsively, "from what Alec told me I believe that Alan is in love with Genevieve Black truly, and I feel it in my bones that he will win out. Poor Thee!"

Virginia said nothing. She wondered, as she had so often, what Elizabeth and her mother, whom she dearly loved, would say if they knew that it was she whom Theodore loved, or persuaded himself he did, and that she who thought so highly of him had refused him, because she did not love him. It did seem strange, she supposed, that any girl could refuse a charming, straight, clean fellow like Theodore. She must be different, for she loved her violin more than any man in the universe.

"Elizabeth, what have you done to Raoul?" she demanded. "He hardly came near you."

"I wrote him a note that even penetrated his shell of complacency. I wanted to let him down easily, but what can you do with such a man?"

"'If he won't, he won't and there's an end on't. So 'Lizbeth has to squelch it by sending him a son't.'"

"Oh, 'Lizbeth, how can you spout such elegant verse? The evening has gone to your head even if you didn't take wine. Isn't it a boon that we do not have lessons till eleven tomorrow? I have not practiced a minute today. This ends my social functions. I can have good times but I can't dissipate, not only for financial reasons but more because if I did, I could not study as I should. Some people say you cannot combine sentiment and business. I know you cannot combine sassiety and work; at least I cannot."

CHAPTER IV

MUSIC HATH CHARMS

THE girls were at lunch the next day. Both were unusually sober and quiet.

“I would say you were blue, Virginia, if I didn’t know that you scorned such weakness!” Elizabeth declared at last.

“I am afraid it’s nothing so poetical as blue; it’s more like dark gray and out of sorts, which some people call in plain English, cross. I never knew Camondreau so hard to please and faultfinding. I had practiced a difficult *étude* and exercise until I was sure even he would be almost satisfied, but nothing suited him. He flew in a rage and told me that my brains were in my feet; that I played as if I were a hurdy-gurdy. Then he walked the floor while I went over a new *étude*, and at the end he acted as if he had not heard it; instead he ex-

ploded again: 'Beranger threw it up to me that I hadn't a pupil who could hold a candle to a young woman who came into the Café de Paris before Christmas, just a shabby, poor, untrained violinist, but such playing! and in spite of her dress'—I blush to repeat it—'such a face! I asked him why he let her get away without giving her name and address, but he only laughed and said he couldn't be running after a pretty face with his reputation! I would take her if Beranger's rhapsody were half true, and make of her a world's wonder. And now she is lost, I suppose. She has probably left the city!'"

"You told him who she was, didn't you?" Elizabeth asked, so excited she stopped eating to stare across the table at her friend.

"I started to but he shut me off and told me to go and next time he would be in a better mood. I tell you, 'Lizbeth, I was so incensed that I vowed I would never go back, but, of course, I can't afford to give way to wrath no matter how righteous I may consider it. I

must make good, and Camondreau is the instrument of Heaven which is to lead me to success!"

"I only wish I had been there, I would have shouted out who the violinist was until he would have had to listen!" cried Elizabeth.

"Well, I was so humiliated by his treatment of me that I wouldn't insist. Then, I am not very proud of that incident in my career anyhow. All I thought of was to put a mile between me and that unreasonable creature. I threw on my wraps, seized my violin and was out the door of the studio before you could say Jack Robinson."

"I don't wonder; it's a shame that you must bear such things."

"Well, they are rare, and never has the master been like that. I don't believe you have had an hour of triumph from your face."

"No," agreed Elizabeth. "Monsieur Étienne is never in a rage. He is cool and sarcastic. 'So much feeling! It reminds one of an image of stone, Mademoiselle. Behold

the suppleness of your fingers, they are like the puppets in a Punch and Judy show I saw in London! Your improvement is rapid. It must give you, as you Americans say, the head big.' So he ran on. I was terribly afraid I would play the baby instead of the piano, and cry, but I made the effort of my life and downed the flood-gates. I tried to think that his vacation disagreed with him, that he had dyspepsia; but I, too, wish I might never see him again, but, I know, he is an excellent teacher. Oh, Virginia, do let us go to the Louvre this afternoon: my treat. I'm extra rich now; do let us run off this once."

"You take me at my weak moment: I should refuse, but the flesh is weak. I never was more grateful: I shall practice hard this evening and early in the morning to make up. Come, let us do the work in two winks of a parrot's eye."

"I can't understand," Elizabeth went on, as she wiped the dishes vigorously, "why Monsieur Étienne is never called simply Étienne

and Camondreau never has the Monsieur before his name."

Virginia, in mock terror, backed away to the limit of their tiny kitchen as she ventured in a whisper: "Is it not because Camondreau is so great? He is Le Camondreau, the only one."

Elizabeth laughed. They had had many spirited arguments over the attractive merits of their teachers, but to-day, as she declared, she felt "too put out to fight any battle for Monsieur."

The next lesson day was Saturday. The girls had their former hours, Elizabeth at ten, Virginia at half-past one. Elizabeth walked down to meet her chum, anxious to see how the land lay. Virginia smiled at sight of her. She slipped her free arm through hers.

"Camondreau is the limit," she declared, laughing. "I was barely inside the door when he shook his finger at me and laughed heartily. 'What shall one do to a young woman who pulls the wool over the eyes of men? If you were one of my country women you should go

to jail or a convent, but'—he shrugged—
'what is one to do with these crazy Americans?' 'What do you mean, Monsieur?' I asked with dignity, though I know I turned as red as fire. 'Somebody told,' he cried like a boy instead of a white-haired man. 'I was lamenting to the great doctor of my losing track of Beranger's find. He let me rave a while, then he vowed me to secrecy and told me the story.'

"I never saw him in such spirits," Virginia went on; "he praised me to the skies, so that I found courage to ask him to listen while I played him something."

"Yes, that is what I wanted to hear; oh, Virginia, what did he say?"

"He listened with the closest attention, and when I ended I was really shocked to see tears in his keen old eyes.

"'It is from the heart; strange that I never heard it. The air is charming and at times pathetic. Who is the composer? He should be better known.' 'It is I, Monsieur,' I stam-

mered like a little girl, 'Lizbeth. 'What? Is this true? Have you published it? Where is the manuscript?' 'At my rooms,' I said. Then he urged its publication 'at once.' He offered to see to it himself. 'They will cheat you,' he told me. 'Women are always robbed. It is a gem,' he added; 'not so *difficile* as touching, lovely, appealing. Ah, Mademoiselle, Paula Van Buren was right when she said you had the gift!'"

"And the title? Did he like that?" Elizabeth asked eagerly.

"I rather dreaded to tell him when he said: 'What have you called it?' But I faltered out the words: 'The Coming of the King.' Yet even that he did not criticise. 'Bring me the manuscript at once,' he ordered."

"How fine that he will see to its publication! I know it will be a success! Just think of your being able to compose! Well, if I can't be a genius myself it's next best to live with one!"

"How absurd you are, 'Lizbeth!" cried

Virginia. "But oh, it has made me happy! I tried not to let myself feel so down at the last lesson; I told myself that, after all, Camondreau was a mere man, and subject to whims and moods; but I confess that a terrible fear seized me; I wondered if all my struggles were for nothing; if I were, after all, a nobody."

"I hate Camondreau!" Elizabeth exclaimed with sudden vehemence. "No man because he is a celebrity and a genius has any right to lose control of himself whenever he feels like it. 'No one is a law to one's self.' A nice world it would be if it were full of Camondreaus."

"That's gospel truth, 'Lizbeth dear; but I love Camondreau. I am in love with all the world to-day. I am going to work my head off; I must win out; I am going to do what my own dear mother would want me to do: use my grandmother's legacy to the utmost."

"You will, too, Virginia; I have always been sure of it. You play now as well as a professional musician. Next year will be the test. You will see then when you play to big houses

that you are truly the Violin Lady of the world!"

The girls were in their rooms. Virginia, her eyes shining, whirled Elizabeth about as a "relief to feelings," as Mary Cary would say.

"You are the dearest chum, 'Lizabeth, a girl ever had. What I shall ever do without you when you go back I don't know!"

There was a rap on the door, sharp, imperative. Virginia opening it found herself face to face with Doctor de Thèvenau. He looked pale and unsmiling.

"Miss Hammond, will you come with me? I want you to play for a friend. Do you know a few things without your notes? Can you come at once?"

Virginia gave a decided affirmative to both questions. After a few hasty touches to her toilet and a word of explanation to Elizabeth she found herself in the doctor's machine.

Virginia stole a glance at the man's face, so unlike the one she knew. It was grave, tense, absorbed.

At last he spoke: "We are going to the home of the Duc d'Angoulême. His sister, Madame de Campanie, is in a serious state mentally. Her only child was killed instantly in an automobile accident a few months ago and she has not shed a tear. We have tried everything, but she sits in her great chair looking at everything with unseeing eyes, her face calm, stoical, rigid. Her brother, the Duc, said yesterday: 'I wish I knew of a good violinist; Emilie has always been so fond of the violin. There's just a chance that it might prove the magician's wand to touch her heart and unseal the pent-up tears. She says she always feels like crying if it is well played.' Then, Mademoiselle, I thought of you. I was sure you would be glad to use your gift in so humane a cause. God grant you may be successful!"

Virginia could not speak, but there was no need. They were slowing down before a spacious house. Silently the doctor helped her out and led her to the entrance. Before they could ring the bell the large doors were thrown back

and they passed within. Virginia was conscious of exquisite statuary and paintings in the large hall. At the right a heavy velvet portière was pushed back by the doctor's vigorous arm and the girl found herself in a beautiful room, all soft browns and dull yellows. A tall, distinguished-looking man — the Duc — came forward and said a few words of greeting. A woman of perhaps forty, though she looked younger, sat dressed in black in a massive carved chair. Her hair was of a beautiful dark red, her eyes brown, and the saddest Virginia had ever seen. Her skin was fair but colorless. She looked at the newcomers indifferently, then turned her gaze out the window.

At a gesture from the doctor Virginia threw off her wraps and gloves, took her violin, and tuned it. Madame never turned her head. Virginia suddenly felt no longer afraid. She must not falter. This was no ordinary case: she must not fail these people who looked to her for help and succor. With a prayer in her

heart she played the "Swan Song," "La Lieberstraume," then "I Would That My Love Would Silently Flow." At the last the still figure by the window stirred restlessly. She turned and looked at the young musician. Virginia went through a few of her usual numbers, but still no result save that Madame showed she was listening. All at once Virginia remembered the tears in Camondreau's eyes. She would try her own composition. It must succeed. She would forget herself; she would feel every tone.

As the exquisite introduction came to an end Madame showed the first sign of emotion. Her lips trembled. Virginia played on. The King was a child, anybody's child. Every one bows before him; but the mother cuddles him to her and sings him to sleep. The lullaby sounds like a voice. It is so tender it caresses the child. It foretells his future. The mother ends with a prayer to Christ to watch over him, lead him to the best and highest. The violin here breathes forth the most imploring tones;



“ WITH A PRAYER IN HER HEART SHE PLAYED THE ‘SWAN
SONG’ ”

then comes the *finale*, growing more and more triumphant till it ends in a burst of joy and gratitude. Doubtless Madame de Campanie did not read all the composer depicted, but the spirit of it touched her, and the lullaby was as perfect as if the words were spoken. The air changes here from the arrival, which is joyful and full of life, to the most beautiful song without words. One does not need a vivid imagination to see the child, his eyes drooping, in his mother's arms, to comprehend the meaning of the lullaby. The beautiful head of the stricken mother fell forward on the broad window-seat, and the sobs hitherto denied her broke from her aching heart. At a sign from the doctor Virginia played it again. The sobs changed to a healing shower of tears. Words came from her in a rush of feeling: "My boy, Victoire! I, too, sang for him; his pretty curly head rested on my arm. God help me, I want him so; I want him so."

The doctor bent over her, speaking words of endearment. The Duc walked the floor. Vir-

ginia caught up her case and wraps and vanished through the portière. She walked the length of the hall and sat on one of the carved benches, waiting. The scene she had left was too sacred for outsiders. As she looked about her at the collection of art treasures, her attention was held by a large painting opposite of a boy of about four years. She knew he must be Victoire in his earlier childhood. He had his mother's auburn hair, only a shade darker, the same wonderful eyes, only less sad, the same fair skin, the charming mouth.

It gave Virginia's heart a sharp pang as she looked at the beautiful boy. Why, why must there be so much trouble in the world?

It was a half hour before the doctor joined her. She tried not to look at him, for his rugged face still showed the keenest emotion.

"It is all right," he said briefly.

They drove home in silence.

It was not until they reached Madame Victoire's that the doctor followed Virginia into the hall, out of the chauffeur's hearing.

"You understand that words can't thank you," he said. "The Duc wishes to pay you a large sum, but I felt that it wouldn't do; was I wrong?"

"No, no!" cried Virginia, shrinking as if she had been hurt. "It has been such a wonderful thing that I could bring something good to Madame in her great sorrow and help you. I shall be grateful all my life for it."

"It has been more than I can tell to me," the great man said huskily. "Please God, Madame will be my wife soon. I have loved her since I was a boy. God's blessing on you, Mademoiselle." And he was gone.

Virginia went into the little living-room more shaken than she knew. Elizabeth looked up from the letter she was writing with a joke on her lips. At sight of Virginia's face she said instead: "Virginia, are you sick? You poor girl, I'm going to put you to bed." She tossed her letter aside and began taking off her friend's wraps.

"No, no," protested Virginia; "we're going

to the Latin Quarter for supper or dinner at the Café Soufflet. I'm not ill at all. It's only that I'm a little upset. I shall soon be myself."

She told Elizabeth all but the doctor's love affair — she felt that that was not hers to repeat.

"No wonder you're upset!" Elizabeth cried, her eyes full of tears. "Oh, Virginia, I don't believe there's a day that you don't help somebody. You took your motto at Miss Kemble's school, 'I serve,' and you follow it yet."

"Don't, please; you make me ashamed, 'Lizabeth. I was just thinking yesterday that since I've come here I'm so busy and absorbed in my music I am getting self-centered. You're so patient and dear, you're really no judge. Think of all you do with your allowance — I have so much less money. Come, we must start. There's no time to throw bouquets at each other. What wouldn't I give to walk in on them at home to-night!"

A week later came a package for Virginia. Opening it the girl found in a morocco case a

beautiful brooch. It was painted exquisitely on ivory, the head of one of Raphael's cherubs set with pearls. Virginia took up the card. It read in French: "Not as a compensation for help which cannot be paid for; but as a slight inadequate expression of gratitude, from Emilie de Campanie."

The two hung over the dainty thing in girlish rapture.

"Virginia, this will be a family heirloom," cried Elizabeth.

"In your family then, or in Bob's or Janet's, for this Miss Hammond is wedded to her violin."

"Do you realize, Virginia," Elizabeth asked abruptly, "that Alan will soon be over? Father writes that he will send him on special business next month."

"No, indeed, I haven't forgotten. It will be good to see his strong face again. I tell you, Elizabeth Gardiner Jordan, that there are few men as straight and clean and dependable as Thee and Alan. The more I see of men,"

added the experienced woman of the world, "the more I appreciate the fact."

"That is true," admitted Elizabeth, "but there are others. Did I tell you that Alec Forbes called while you were away this afternoon? He has been to Lyons and leaves this evening for Holland. He is abroad on business for his uncle, and he let me think it was merely a pleasure trip. He seems a nice fellow. I always liked him. And, what do you think? He asked me if my health were better since I came, and if I found that the baths in Germany helped me? I just stared at him. I told him I had not been near Germany, and that I was the healthiest girl going, except you, and he seemed so astonished. I said at last, 'Where in the world did you hear such fairy tales as these?' He seemed to try to remember. 'Oh, it was that Monsieur D'Artois that I met at Mrs. Archer's. He said he was a great friend of yours, but that he felt intense pity for you because your lungs were very bad.' I told him that Monsieur made a grave mistake,

that we were not friends, and that I feared for reasons best known to himself he had willfully created fiction of the lurid type."

"Elizabeth, I wish that you had never known Raoul D'Artois; he is a dangerous man," Virginia asserted gravely.

"My dear, it takes brains to scheme evil as well as good things, and poor Raoul's are scanty and of cheap quality," scoffed Elizabeth.

"A fool without principle or honor is a menace to others, because he has nothing to hinder his slanderous tongue," she observed sagely. "Well, if one behaves oneself and walks straightly, even the gentleman with horns is harmless!"

But Virginia shook her head in denial. Elizabeth turned, as was her habit, to happier topics.

"Do you realize how we've improved in learning and speaking French since we came?" she asked. "We both have studied it since the days at Miss Kemble's and thought we were excellent French scholars, but eight months in

Paris have been more beneficial than years at home."

"Yes, it struck me more forcibly when talking with Dr. de Thèvenau: I suppose Frenchmen would recognize our nationality, hearing us murder their tongue, but they are evidently too polite to say so. Camondreau insists that I speak it wonderfully well."

"And Monsieur DuBarry said the same to me at your aunt's, so let us pretend they are right; it makes one feel so satisfied."

"Elizabeth, sometimes I think you're Janet's age, sometimes I think you're older than I," Virginia exclaimed, laughing. "You certainly wrest a great deal of pleasure from life wherever you are."

Elizabeth hurried off to her lesson and Virginia practiced some difficult exercises. But her mind wandered. For not the first time she thought wonderingly of the change in the doctor's face when he told her of his intended marriage, of his emotion—he who had operated on hundreds of patients and whose eyes had

seen most distressing scenes — and again she stood appalled at the power of this thing called love, which could be so potent a factor in the lives of men and women. And again she hoped that she might not come under its power, at least for a long time. There was so much she wanted to do, and it seemed to be so engrossing, so revolutionary and upsetting, so frightening!

CHAPTER V

TRIALS ARE TESTS TO PROVE THE METTLE THAT
IS IN US

LENT was nearly over when several things, all of which were connected with Virginia's life, happened in quick succession. First, through Camondreau's supervision and efforts, Virginia's musical number was published, and bade fair to be a success; then, as the girls were rejoicing over that, came as great surprises the other way. A letter from Mr. Jordan stated briefly that Mr. Elston would represent the firm abroad instead of Alan, who had decided to go West instead to see the Blacks.

"Genevieve!" murmured Elizabeth as she read the news aloud to Virginia. "Well, I must say," added that young woman, with her usual frankness, "I do think Alan might have

postponed his visit and come to see us. I know father is disappointed. Alan is so much more capable, if he is younger than Mr. Elston. I can't believe it. This love business must be a queer thing! And poor Thee will have to suffer, too, I know. I don't see why Alan could not run across. He told me he longed to come abroad, and I don't see why father let him off." So Elizabeth fumed.

Virginia said much less, but she felt more. It was a real pain to her that her old chum and playmate should give up his plan, and again she wondered why and how this newer girl should influence her two friends to such an extent. She had not realized until now how much she had counted on Alan's coming. She had planned dozens of places and things to show him, of little trips the three, or with a fourth added, could take to near-by places of interest: above all, of the talks they would have — Alan always understood her, and was so interested in her plans for the future. She evidently did not hold as prominent a place in his

life as he in hers. Thank fortune, she was loyal to her old friends, and always would be!

Elizabeth felt surprise that Virginia took Alan's defection so calmly, which shows that even one's best friend cannot always read one's heart. It was not so much that Virginia was secretive as that she felt too deeply to mention the subject.

She plunged into her music study with so much zeal that Elizabeth declared she was growing thin under the stress.

"It is as I've always said," Virginia told herself, "my violin is my best friend. It never hurts me, it never talks back, it comforts me, it gives me happiness."

Aunt Henrietta had stayed longer in Rome than she intended, and had been back but a few weeks. She was vexed with her niece for, as she expressed it, being a recluse at her age. She scolded and protested in vain. Virginia went quite often to see her and accepted with Elizabeth invitations once in a week or two for a small luncheon or informal social afternoon

affair, but she could not and would not give the time to society her aunt desired. She had neither the money nor the clothes, but, more than these obstacles, was the need to give of her strength and time to her chosen profession, which her aunt often treated with impatience sometimes amounting to contempt.

"I wish Mrs. Kirkland had stayed in Rome," Elizabeth stated in her usual manner; "she harasses and finds fault with you constantly. Now that Camondreau has softened towards you, Aunt Henrietta makes up for it by never giving you any peace."

Just before Easter came a letter from Mr. Jordan urging Elizabeth's speedy return home, as her mother was not at all well. "Business complications hold me here," he wrote; "yet I feel that your mother ought to be under constant medical care. She dreads being at the far-away sanitarium her physician recommends, alone. If you were here you could go with her, entertain her and be company for her."

"I should never have come," Elizabeth declared. "It was selfish of me. Mother is so dear, she never would interfere with my plans. I feel that I can't go back quickly enough, though it breaks my heart to leave you, Virginia."

Elizabeth's constant joyousness had vanished. Virginia was struck with the change in her. She knew that she and Thee were both unusually fond of their mother, but even she had not realized the strength of the girl's attachment. She tried to be cheerful, but she seemed to begrudge the days that must elapse before she could sail.

Virginia was invaluable. She helped Elizabeth shop; she did most of her packing; she engaged her passage on *La Lorraine*, and arranged all details.

She wrote letters for her.

"I seem so inefficient," Elizabeth exclaimed deprecatingly, "but that dreadful Atlantic frightens me! It is so big, and takes so long to cross it." Elizabeth looked up from her

work to flash one of her old laughing glances at her friend. "It distresses me to think that it will be between Raoul and me!" She made a *moue*.

Everything was pushed to hasten her departure, and, at the last, Elizabeth came in from a last shopping trip visibly brightened and cheered.

"Alec Forbes is going over on the same steamer after all," she announced to Virginia. "I met him a few days ago and told him you had secured passage for me on *La Lorraine*. And he found a man who preferred to wait another month and who sold him his tickets. It is so fortunate. It won't be you, Virginia, but it will be an old friend."

Virginia and Aunt Henrietta went with her to Havre and saw her off. The girls clung to each other at parting and some tears were shed. Virginia yielded to Aunt Henrietta's urgent request to stay over Sunday with her, but it was only putting off the evil hour. The first few days after her return the rooms seemed unbear-

able. Everywhere Virginia missed the sunny, laughing, gay companion of so many months. Almost she wished that she had been less congenial so that the separation might be less painful. The Trask girls came to see her and Mrs. Archer invited her now and then to lunch and Sunday dinners; but they were very gay and always very busy. Virginia thought them very kind to give her the attention and thought they did. Madame La Fontaine, a friend of her aunt's, came now and then to take her to drive in her machine, as did Aunt Henrietta. To her surprise, Madame de Campanie, who had been to Geneva, returned in the later spring and carried her off to her brother's beautiful country place over Sunday. She had taken a great fancy to the "Violin Lady," as she loved to call her. She looked much better, and was trying to bear her sorrow in a braver spirit, she told Virginia in her sweet, appealing manner. It was a great treat to the girl to go to the old château with its vast and beautiful grounds and interesting house. The Duc had

two other country places, but Madame preferred this as much nearer her beloved Paris, and Virginia suspected that there were other and more personal reasons. She sometimes met the doctor there, but he had to snatch leisure when he could, not when he wished.

Aunt Henrietta was much impressed with the friendship of Madame de Campanie for her niece. She, herself, did not number a Duc among her acquaintances in the years of her social climbing in the land of her adoption. She felt sure that the noble family had recognized in the apparently simple girl from humble lodgings the Leighton blood of which she was so proud. Royalty itself could not have worshiped Family with a capital more than did Aunt Henrietta. She never forgot for an hour that Providence in His goodness had made her a Leighton and permitted her to marry wealth in the form of Peter Kirkland, thus combining the two ingredients she considered necessary to form the mixture which made life bearable. The last of June she left Paris

for the summer to take a trip with some wealthy friends to Norway and Sweden. She felt some qualms as she thought of Virginia. She could easily have taken her to Switzerland and given up her costlier trip, but she could not make up her mind to forego the joys and éclat of going with the DuBarrys. As usual she excused herself. Virginia did not mind. She was such a plucky girl. And if she must earn her living, or was determined to play in public, as Aunt Henrietta put it, there was no need of such sacrifice on her part. It would only perhaps spoil the girl and unfit her for her work.

A few days after her departure Virginia, with a bold front but sinking heart, set out for Camondreau's studio for her last lesson and to pay the maestro's bill for the last few months. It would take all but fifty dollars of her carefully hoarded earnings. As Mr. Jordan had said, it took considerable money to live in Paris and take lessons of an artist like Camondreau. She had cut down in every way, but only since Elizabeth had gone did Virginia realize in how

many unobtrusive ways had her friend supplied wants and eased the other's burdens. She had, too, shared the rent of the rooms. Virginia felt that she would be obliged to borrow money of her stepmother, who would, she knew, cheerfully give it to her; but she had hoped against hope that this would not be necessary.

Camondreau left the city always by the first of August. He had been certain of getting Virginia an engagement, but several unforeseen things had occurred to upset his plans. "The Coming of the King" brought in a small but welcome sum. Elizabeth had taken it to America to see if her father and Alan could not sell it for her, but it was slow work. Elizabeth wrote her regularly from the sanitarium in the Catskills, where she was with her mother, whose improvement was tedious and far from speedy. Theodore's letters, while free from the forbidden topic, had lately been less frequent and more brief and unsatisfactory. Virginia told herself that she ought to be thankful that his ardor was cooling since it could not

be reciprocated, but she did not want him to cease being her warm friend. Alan's letters, too, though cordial and friendly, were different. Miss Van Buren had not written her for months. To be sure, she was always, as she herself said, a wretched correspondent, but she had never waited this long.

As Virginia came from the bank to the studio her woes accumulated. Usually optimistic, it seemed to-day as if life held for her no rose-colored future. She would give up her tiny suite and take a single room in the rear. She would see Madame Victoire at once. She would cut down her rations. She tried to force a smile and assume a general air of prosperity as she entered Camondreau's rooms — thank heaven, she still had handsome clothes!

Camondreau met her with outstretched hands. "I telephoned you, Mademoiselle, but your landlady said you were out," he greeted her. "I have good news. A countryman of yours — Monsieur Van Anden — I know quite well, is most anxious to engage a first-class vio-

linist to tour Great Britain and Ireland in the fall and winter. He came to me. I assured him that I have no half-way artist, but a genius, full of promise, an accomplished musician; that if I were younger I should ask nothing better of Fate than to introduce her myself. But alas! it might be he was too late; a wonder like this American had many offers. I would see Mademoiselle. I would intercede for him. He said if he could only obtain a good vocalist and this paragon he would consider himself in Paradise."

"I believe I could give him what he wants," Virginia declared eagerly. "I have a friend, Mademoiselle Le Duc, who is studying in Berlin. She has a beautiful soprano, highly cultivated —"

"Can you get your friend here soon?" Camondreau asked, walking the floor, as was his habit when agitated.

"I believe I could," Virginia assured him, hardly less moved.

"Monsieur Van Anden's sister, an excellent

pianist, will act as accompanist and chaperon: behold, Mademoiselle, all is well. Here is the opportunity to make your début and charm the world. I shall arrange the matter if I must postpone my departure." Camondreau threw out his hands with his usual gestures.

"You are most kind, Monsieur," Virginia said warmly; "and now we must settle my bill. Please tell me the exact sum."

"Ah, Mademoiselle, that has been settled these many weeks. You owe me not one sou."

He smiled into her amazed countenance. He was evidently enjoying himself.

"But, Monsieur, I do not understand —"

"But, Mademoiselle Hammond, I tell you the fact I am paid, and I absolutely refuse to be paid twice."

"Who has done this?" Virginia demanded.

"That I cannot tell you. Hein, Mademoiselle, why frown so anxiously? If any kind friend would pay Camondreau's bills, would I worry? Would I insist that I know the name?"

It is with you only a question of time when ducats will flow into your coffers. It is the truth I am telling you."

Virginia could do nothing with him. She finally set out for home, her mind full of conflicting thoughts. Could Aunt Henrietta in a sudden spasm of compunction have paid her bill before leaving? Had Mr. Jordan forwarded it? Surely the Duc d'Angoulême had not taken this way to repay her for a simple courtesy, an act of kindly sympathy? Ah, she hoped not! Well, she could do nothing. Why not accept her good fortune with gratitude? Perhaps some day she would be able to return it; who knew? Meanwhile a heavy weight was lifted from her heart. Now, she need not send home for money. Now, she had a promising engagement for October. Her heart beat quickly as she thought of what it meant to her. And if Marcelle could again be her companion, as she had been on the trip to the Western States they had taken, what more could she ask? And she had lost faith and felt discour-

aged! Would she never learn to be undaunted though the heavens fell?

She must send a telegram to Marcelle in Berlin asking her to come at once. She had intended visiting her friend some time in August for her long delayed trip to Paris, which something had always prevented. The telegram sent, Virginia, after her simple supper at home, sat by the open window trying to catch the breeze that Madame Victoire declared meant death and destruction to life. As she sat there, Virginia's thoughts went back over the past. She could see Marcelle and herself in the little church in the Nebraska town where an automobile mishap had detained them a few hours, listening to the rector, Mr. Lauderdale, telling them the brief histories of the different pieces of church furniture and how they were given. She heard again as plainly as if it were yesterday the story of the reading desk: how a Frenchman, one of a noble family but who had lived a wasted, dissipated life, fell sick in the town and the rector had from a friendly call

been his best friend in the days that followed. How, after his death, his relatives in France had sent the rector money for his work, and one of the things he had used it for was the needed desk of black walnut. And then her friend's question, "Was his name Marcel Le Duc?" she had asked. And the kindly rector's remorse to find that he was her father.

She saw later Marcelle in their room at the hotel telling her for the first time her story: of her father's desertion of her and her mother, of her mother's hardships and death, leaving her to the care of an uneducated, almost destitute, Italian woman; of her singing on the streets with the woman, to support her and her children, of her being discovered by Miss Van Buren, through whose efforts she was adopted by a wealthy New Yorker; of her advantages and wonderful improvement in the three years in her family. Then the coming home of the eldest son of the house from a long trip around the world, worthless, debauched. His infatuation for the girl, his mother's determination

that she must marry him, throwing up to her all she had done for her with — Marcelle saw too late — this end in view. The persecution from the two until the girl ran away to her governess', where, with the aid of her music-teacher, she obtained a position with Virginia to tour part of the West. This being successful, the girls earned enough to give them a year's study abroad, Marcelle going to Herr Schmidt at Berlin, Virginia to Paris.

And now they were to be together once more — perhaps! What if Marcelle had obtained a better position? She had been singing a great deal lately, and had earned extra money which had helped her materially. Mrs. Kirkland might have done considerable in this way for Virginia, but her false pride stood in the way. Camondreau might have found work for her also, but with one of his eccentric moods he declared he did not want his most promising pupil to be known until he considered her ready; then let the curtain rise and disclose her to the world!

Virginia went early to bed. Her anticipations for the future filled her mind to the exclusion of all else. To-morrow she would know about Marcelle. To-morrow she would meet Mr. Van Anden. Would he and his sister be as pleasant as Mr. and Mrs. Stedman, her former manager and his wife. Would he agree with Camondreau and Miss Van Buren as to her playing? Would her English audiences prove as cordial and enthusiastic as those in her own land?

To-morrow promised much, and the to-morrow of the future more. What was that familiar line Elizabeth was always quoting from Cowper's "Needless Alarm"? "The darkest day lived till to-morrow will have passed away."

CHAPTER VI

MARCELLE ARRIVES

THE next morning early came an answer to Virginia's telegram.

"I shall be with you to-night at six o'clock.
"MARCELLE."

It seemed to Virginia that she had never spent a longer day. She was at the train to meet her friend and took her to a little café near the station, where they served an excellent yet prescribed menu.

They hardly noticed what they ate, there was so much to talk over. Marcelle had had two offers, but neither promised so well as this one. Each had much to tell the other of their year. Marcelle looked and seemed less grave, happier. She was in excellent condition. Her clothes, Virginia could not but notice, were in the best of taste and most becoming.

At eight they were ready to receive Camondreau and Mr. Van Anden. Both girls had gained more confidence since their stage fright with Mr. Stedman; yet their outward composure was belied by a certain weakness in the knees.

Virginia played that most difficult Veracini's "Sonate in D," then Kann's "Fantasiestück," and her own "The Coming of the King." Mr. Van Anden made no secret of his surprise and enthusiasm, though he had the air of trying to check its too frank admission.

Elizabeth's rented piano was gone, but Virginia accompanied Marcelle in an aria from *La Traviata* and Virginia's favorite, Knapp's "Open the Gates." She almost stopped playing in her pleasure over the girl's improvement. She joined with the men in their praise of her marvelous voice. Camondreau acted for them in the business arrangements. The *maestro* was an anomaly, a mixture of shrewd business sense and the caprices and moods of a child. The girls fairly held their breath as he

insisted on the high salaries he considered their right.

Finally he won out, and the four parted, three of them not to meet again until early October, when Mr. Van Anden and his sister were to join them at Cardiff, Wales, where the girls were to take part in a grand concert as soloists. From there they were to make a tour of the principal cities and towns of England and a few in Scotland and Ireland.

During the rest of the week the girls took a holiday, sight-seeing and visiting. Marcelle had never been in Paris and all was new and deeply interesting. They kept up the sight-seeing later, but practiced regularly every day together and apart. Marcelle rented a piano.

Madame Bernard and Adrien had gone home in June. The child was improving steadily, but it was a slow process. The great doctor instructed the mother in the treatment, and told her characteristically that there was no use in paying money any longer for what she could do herself; to come two or three times a year for

inspection; and to keep him out of doors as much as possible. Adrien wrote quaint little notes to the Violin Lady, whose playing he missed and loved. A rare and brief letter came from Aunt Henrietta, inclosing a generous check.

“If you will seek notoriety, Virginia, I am determined that you shall be properly clothed for the occasion,” she wrote. “Alan Kingsbury made a most fortunate investment of some of my money — a very clever, long-headed fellow, my dear — so I’m dividing my first dividends with you. Do go at once and order two gowns. You have done wonders with those I gave you long ago, but they won’t last forever.”

“It is a sop to her conscience, poor Aunt Henrietta!” Virginia said to Marcelle. “Now you, my dear, would return the check with a high and lofty note and go to England clad in rags and tags and noble pride, but I shall go at once and order the gowns. I had enough from the sales of ‘The Coming of the King’ to buy

a white silk and use some lovely lace I had from my days of luxury; but I need more and have tried not to worry over the matter. I'm 'umble and grateful, instead of proud and 'otty for this unexpected bonus."

Marcelle smiled. "You know the cases are different," she said. "I, too, have worried over your wardrobe, and was wondering last night if I dare offer you a slice of my money, but even my courage failed me, and I postponed the effort."

"I appreciate the thought, *chérie*, and I would have accepted a loan to be repaid when I'm rich and famous; but I'm glad that it isn't necessary," Virginia declared.

In early September came a note from Madame Campanie inviting Virginia to spend the week-end at the château. "Monsieur le docteur tells me you have a friend with you; we should be delighted to have you bring her with you if she will pardon the informality," she wrote. Madame had been for a short visit at Lyons.

"I am so glad to have you see this lovely old château and the grounds," Virginia said with sparkling eyes. She told Marcelle of her first meeting with Madame. The rare tears sprang to Marcelle's eyes as she listened. Madame Victoire was overwhelmed with the fact of the Violin Lady's hobnobbing with the nobility. She had told her neighbor, Thérèse Crepin, of the honors accorded her lodger, and now her facile tongue elaborated the virtues of the newcomer. "Her voice is the finest in the world," she insisted; "she has sung before the German Emperor. And now that the Violin Lady is run after so by the Duc and his sister and the great doctor, there's no telling how soon there will be a wedding. A prince is none too fine for her. With her fiddle she is a walking silver mine; the hen with the golden eggs was nothing to her."

Madame generously sent her limousine for the girls. They were nearly to the stone steps of the château when Marcelle said laughingly: "Do you know, Virginia, that you have

never told me the Duc's name? You always say 'the Duc.' "

" Yes, life's too short to bother with French names —"

The magnificent butler threw open the wide doors and bowed obsequiously. The two were ushered through the beautiful hall to a small room to one side.

Marcelle was about to seat herself when she suddenly stood transfixed, her eyes on a large painting of a full-sized portrait of a boy of about twelve.

" It is my father," she said in an incredulous tone. " Where —"

" No, Mademoiselle, it is my brother, if you please," murmured one of the sweetest voices in the most perfect French she had ever heard directly behind her.

Virginia, bewildered by a sudden premonition that came to her mind, introduced Marcelle to Madame.

" Yes, it is my brother who died in America," Madame further informed them, " Does the

picture then bear such a resemblance to your father, Mademoiselle Le Duc?"

"It is my father; my mother had a small miniature just like it; I have it now," Marcelle declared.

"What is your name?" Madame asked with a puzzled look.

"Marcelle Le Duc."

"My brother's name was Marcel Le Duc de Marne," Madame stated. "It is strange. He died in a little Western town, Dorset, Nebraska."

"And his friend there was a rector, Mr. Lauderdale, his brother is the Duc d'Angoulême and his sister Madame d'Orsai," supplied Marcelle.

"It was Madame d'Orsai, but is now de Campanie," corrected Madame. She turned quickly as a step sounded by the door and the Duc entered.

"François, this is Mademoiselle Hammond's friend, Mademoiselle Le Duc. She is from America. Her father's name was Marcel Le

Duc. She says that our brother is her father, but, of course, our Marcel was a bachelor."

The Duc's keen eyes searched the girl's face. "She shows that she is of our blood," he declared. "Emilie, whom does she resemble?"

"Berenice," Madame said with a little sob. "I was struck with it at once. My dear, forgive my rudeness. Come sit by me and let us know more of this strange story. Will you tell us about your life in America?"

Marcelle, her face colorless, told the shameful story of her father's desertion, after his marriage, of his wife and six-year-old girl, of his failure to provide for them always, of her mother's brave struggle, her death. Marcelle treated her own experiences more briefly. She had the air of disdaining to appeal to the sympathies of her audience. She stated the facts of her life as a street singer after the Italian woman had forbidden her to longer attend the public schools; of her life in a tenement filled with the worst class of foreign men and their

families, of Miss Van Buren, of her experience at the Longstreets', of her meeting with Virginia,—all the merest details.

"You wonderful girl!" Madame explained. "I am very proud of you. But how you have suffered! Why didn't your mother or you ever write to us?"

"Because my father gave us to understand that his family refused to recognize his marriage," Marcelle explained with heightened color. "And my mother — the sweetest, most refined, the daintiest creature I ever knew — would have died rather than appeal to them. I felt the same. I came here, Monsieur," Marcelle turned to the Duc, "under a misapprehension. Strange as it may seem, my friend Miss Hammond never called you by your name, only your title, and Madame de Campanie's name misled me. I shall no longer trouble you. I shall return to Paris at once." But Madame's arms about her gently forced her back beside her.

"My dear child! I don't wonder that you

feel hard towards us!" she said softly; "but you have been cruelly misinformed. We never dreamed that Marcel was married. He rarely wrote us, never after the last two years. Our lawyer sent him remittances at the different addresses he sent him. Will you not let us know you better now that we have found you?"

"You must stay, *ma chérie*, there are so few of us left. Your face is credentials enough. My younger brother was, alas! a sheep of the blackest type. He killed our mother. Evidently he married under his second name, Le Duc. He gave you his first name. My sister's husband after refusing for years to assume his adopted father's name, yielded before his death and substituted De Campanie for d'Orsai. Now, we are straight; is it not so? Emilie, ring for Adele to show the demoiselles to their rooms," ordered the Duc.

Marcelle was silent; Virginia, who understood her proud, tried soul, knew that she

feared to break down. It was not until they were alone in the beautiful suite of rooms accorded to them that the tears came.

"They are kind; I have misjudged them; but ah, Virginia, is it not a terrible thing to have had a father like mine?" she asked.

Virginia wanted to comfort her, but what could she say?

It was not long before the French girl had regained her composure. She had learned self-mastery in a hard school.

Adele, a bright, vivacious maid, laid out their dinner gowns and waited upon them. But the girls wanted to be alone and soon dismissed her.

After the formal dinner they talked over matters.

"But your French is excellent, Marcelle!" Madame exclaimed in a surprised voice.

"My father spoke it always at home and my mother acquired it easily. Then I studied it further under a fine teacher at Madame Longstreet's," the girl explained.

"All these years to atone for!" Madame exclaimed sadly.

Doctor de Thèvenau arrived with four young people. The evening passed delightfully. Virginia played, Marcelle sang. The Duc was amazed at her voice. There were games. After the refreshments the doctor, before leaving, had a few words with Virginia.

"Emilie has told me of the discovery. She is greatly distressed over it. Do what you can to urge your friend to yield to whatever she asks. She admires Mademoiselle Marcelle immensely; aren't you jealous?"

Virginia only smiled.

"But I am so puzzled over something else," she said eagerly. She told him of the paying of her bills by unknown people.

"I wish I knew," she said; "perhaps I ought not to accept it."

The doctor's gray eyes twinkled. "I hardly see what you can do. To accept or not to accept is not the question. It is entirely out of

your hands. Why distress yourself over what if you did know doubtless would seem all right to you. Take the goods the gods send, and enjoy whatever comes."

Sunday after service in the little chapel down the road a mile, the Duc asked to have a private interview with Marcelle, while Virginia stayed with Madame.

"Virginia," she said; "the doctor is unmanageable; he insists on our speedy marriage. He has been, he says, very patient. So I've yielded. François is quite put out with me because it is to be so very quiet and simple. The doctor is worn out with those nerve-racking operations, though he won't acknowledge it, and I only think of getting him away. I have had some pretty gowns made, and I want you and Marcelle to be here at nine Wednesday morning. We shall only have a half-dozen relatives, the ceremony followed by a breakfast."

"How delightful, dear Madame, that two of my best friends are to be married!" cried

Virginia. She thought she had never seen Madame look so charming as now in her white gown. Her dark red hair was handsomely dressed, and her face, bright and animated, looked far younger than that day when she first saw her.

“Virginia dear,” Madame said, “I believe I shall tell you what this marriage means to us. You see, when I was a girl less than twenty, just out of the convent, my parents, almost as soon as they welcomed me home, informed me that I was to marry Henri d’Orsai. There were reasons financial and otherwise why it seemed especially desirable.

“I pleaded for more time and we compromised on six months. I had not been home a week when Philippe de Thèvenau came. I managed to see him alone on the piazza and told him the terrible news. You see, we had known each other as children and promised to marry when we were grown. I had seen more of him than is usual with French girls because his parents were friends of mine — his father

was Comte d'Anton. We were most unhappy, desolated, but there was no hope."

"Pardon me, Madame," Virginia interrupted impulsively, "I cannot understand why it was so hopeless!"

Madame opened astonished eyes. "Why, my child, my parents would not allow it. One must always obey when they command. You see, Philippe was the third son; his family were fine but poor. He would have neither money nor title. We must both marry for money. So I became Madame d'Orsai. I shed many tears, but I made Henri a good wife. He was much older than I, and as the years passed he grew full of caprices and — that funny American word you say — yes, cranky. But he was often kind and we had money — ah, yes, of a cart-load. Then when Victoire came I was happy. Monsieur le docteur married later, a rich widow — with a child — you have seen Heloise? But the wife did not live long. Two years ago Monsieur de Campanie died quite suddenly. Then, as

you know, came my greatest sorrow, my adored Victoire's fatal accident. I wish we were both far younger — Philippe and I — but I need him. He is so strong, so capable, yet so tender. I hope the good God may allow us many years together even now —”

They looked up as the Duc and Marcelle entered. The conversation became general. It was only after they were in their rooms that Marcelle began eagerly: “Virginia, the Duc will not understand. He offers me a certain income but only if I will give up my profession. Just fancy, after all my struggles and study, and just as I have gained a little footing, to turn my back on it all and lead a life objectless and idle. I tried to show him my point of view, but he wouldn't see it at all. His face is so cold and relentless. He reminds me of my idea of the elder son in the parable. Heaven knows there is no excuse for my father, and I can appreciate in part at least all the shame and grief he brought to them, but I could not help resenting it secretly when he

said with such bitterness and scorn: 'It seems incomprehensible to me that in such a family as ours, the best blood of France, we should have had such a blot, such a disgrace as Marcel. I am sorry he gave you his name. It means to us only horror and shame. We, Mademoiselle,' he threw back his head and looked at me, Virginia, as if I were an alien and could never comprehend, as I can't, 'we have had enough disgrace with my brother; we have never entered trade or had plebeian tastes otherwise, and I am determined to prevent it so long as I am head of the family. To think of a woman of our close kin, a woman of our race, singing before the masses, earning money like any common shop-girl, is not only repugnant to me but it is impossible. I supposed that you who have endured so much, who have sunk so low, would have most gratefully and eagerly accepted my offer. It is a shock to me to find you — pardon me — so obstinate and unreasonable, and with all your outward refinement with a touch of the *canaille*.'

“ ‘Monsieur,’ I said as calmly as I could, ‘do you not think that Heaven gives gifts to the high born as well as the humble? I feel that my voice was given to me in trust to make the very most of it, to use it for the pleasure of the greatest number. I have worked as you cannot imagine to reach this goal, and now just as I am offered a chance to make good you insist on my giving it all up, and for what? Not for any plain duty, not for some high purpose, but merely that you may be able to feel and say that no woman of your blood has received an equivalent for service, has never used her voice professionally. Even if I were willing I could not break my word, my contract. I am bound to fulfill my agreement with Monsieur Van Anden. It would mean loss and disappointment to him.’

“ ‘I should make it up to him,’ the Duc said, still in that scornful, contemptuous manner.

“ ‘It is impossible to make it up,’ I said warmly. ‘I cannot think of such a thing.’

“ ‘Then you refuse my offer, you refuse to

live as a lady of rank, you prefer to be a plebeian?' he demanded, not angrily but in that cold repressed tone which acts on me like a plunge into ice cold water or a blast of freezing wind shriveling up my better feelings.

"I bowed assent. He rose and so did I. Just as I turned to the door he cried out as if he couldn't help it: 'You look now just like my youngest sister Berenice; but she always did as I said; she was gentle, docile, amenable. Ah, Mademoiselle, you are throwing away the opportunity of a lifetime, the chance of marriage which would bring you honor and probably high position.'

" 'I do not wish to marry, Monsieur; I think as you evidently do, that celibacy is the safest plan; but I have much that you have not, I have my voice, a purpose in life.' I know that it was impertinent, but I yielded to impulse."

"It seems so strange from our point of view," Virginia said, "that any one should be so narrow and self-centered! It is more like a by-gone age. The Duc was born too late.

He looks with horror at these modern times. He sighs for the old days of royalty, and the reign of rank and blood blue. He clings to his title in this new and disconcerting republic. He cannot understand Doctor de Thèvenau's father and others casting aside theirs. Still, I don't believe Madame would agree with him."

"She is gentler and kinder, but, Virginia, the French way of looking at life and at women — especially the majority of the higher classes — is so entirely different from the American standpoint that it is impossible to come to any agreement."

And Virginia, remembering Madame's views in regard to marriage, her attitude towards the Duc, a dozen little details, felt the truth of Marcelle's statement.

"Still, many French women are adopting a broader outlook," she added hopefully. "Well, the French methods in regard to girls may be, as Aunt Henrietta says, superior in many ways to ours, but I am thankful it was my fate to be born an American."

“I agree with you,” Marcelle assented; “if we were in our humble abode on l’Echelle Street, instead of within the sacred walls of my ancestry, I should sing at the top of my lungs the ‘Star Spangled Banner.’ Instead, we had better forget the house of d’Angoulême and fall into the plebeian sleep of common mortals.”

CHAPTER VII

THE WEDDING

THE following morning — Monday — the girls left early. The Duc was courteous, but as Marcelle remarked later to Virginia, “chilly.” Virginia admired her friend more than she had ever done. It was a difficult position and she felt it, but her manner was perfect; dignified yet agreeable. Indeed, she would have even been approved by the dead and gone paragons of the d’Angoulême ancestry, thought Virginia. The latter devoted herself to the head of the house, leaving Marcelle to the gracious Madame. Both girls were glad when they were en route for their rooms. Marcelle sang under her breath as they sped cityward in the handsome car: “Be it ever so humble there’s no place like home.”

After lunch, as it was refreshingly cool, Virginia went to do some shopping, leaving Marcelle to write letters. She was detained much longer than she intended, and when she returned found her friend rather "on her uppers," as Lucinda Dildine would say.

"Thine eyes show undue exhilaration, *mon amie*," she said as she came in.

"Virginia, I've done something I already regret. I wish that I had listened to my cooler, saner self. But I didn't, alas!"

"Has the Duc been here?"

"No, but his sister came. She was so kind and appealing she disarmed me. The Duc must have repeated to her our interview, at least part of it. She told me that I must not forget that I was her niece, that she felt already strongly drawn towards me; that her brother was very positive and accustomed to rule, but that I must not resent it. She herself had often felt it. 'But, my dear,' she said earnestly, 'we women must yield to the stronger, sterner sex. It was always so intended. I

am, as Virginia has doubtless told you, to be married and leave my brother. It would be such a relief and pleasure to me to know that you would be with him for a while at least. We could easily arrange for a cousin to chaperon you. Won't you reconsider your decision?' I told her it was impossible. I tried to make her see my side of it, but while much sweeter she had as little sympathy with me as the Duc. When she found that I was firm, she begged me to accept a small gift from her. She said that her husband had left her a large fortune, that she had no child to inherit, and she wished to put in the bank a sum for my use. I refused as gently as possible; but I could not bear to see the tears in her eyes and to listen to her plea. I felt like some cold-blooded creature turning down a generous, sweet-natured child. I gave in and she went away smiling and as happy as if I had given to her instead of the other way round. She is certainly dear."

"You did just right," Virginia said deci-

sively. "I'm afraid, Marcelle, you are as proud in your way as the Duc in his. I think it would have been unforgivable in you to refuse Madame. As she says, you are her flesh and blood; she has more than she can use and is to marry a man of large means. If she longs to give a small part of her fortune to you, why refuse?"

"I suppose I have too much pride," Marcelle said thoughtfully. "No one has ever told me before — you see, I am so alone. I don't want to be hateful or ungrateful, but I do so long to be independent of my father's people. He was only a thorn in their side, and I don't want to remind them of their disgrace or to accept their bounty. The Duc even hates my name, which he says 'reminds us only of horror and shame.'"

"But his sister doesn't say so or feel so," Virginia declared. "While her outlook is different from ours, she is a dear sweet woman. Her upbringing and environment have made her what she is; but she is to marry a man of

broader views and wider experience. He will influence her, I feel sure, *positivement*, as Camondreau says."

"I insisted on showing Madame the picture of my father, a ring he had had given him by his father, a few letters he had written to my mother during his courtship and later: I did not want them to have any doubts as to my identity, though I am not proud of belonging to my father!"

Later, when Virginia rejoined Marcelle, after a strenuous hour of violin practice, the latter said: "I've been writing to a French woman in Berlin to whom I taught English, or tried to teach it. She labored over it early and late and was far from dull, but I never realized before how difficult, and as some one has said, how 'exasperatingly contrary' our language must be to all but ourselves. Mademoiselle Panache came to me and said with such a delighted air: 'It is very anguish to-day.' 'What?' I asked, puzzled. 'Anguish,' she repeated; 'I find,' she went on in French, 'that

anguish in the dictionary means chilly.' Another time she said, 'I saw to-day in the country, Mademoiselle, a flock of pork'; meaning a drove of hogs. She spoke once of bread dough, pronouncing it duff; when I corrected her she said, 'But you don't say thoruff for thorough; and cough is coff, and trough is troff, and rough is ruff, yet bough is bow.' She persisted in calling laugh loaf. She declared she devoured a spider because the dictionary said that devour meant to destroy. It puzzled her so to use can as a verb meaning to be able and also to preserve fruit in air-tight vessels; and she couldn't realize that we have two words, both adjectives and both spelled alike — light — and that the one means bright, clear, the other not heavy, volatile, gay. And that sight and site and cite are all pronounced alike yet have such different meanings and are spelled differently; also mine as well. Beet a vegetable and beat to strike was confusing, and when she heard a boy in our pension calling to a child 'Beat it!' and found it meant neither,

she was in despair, even when I told her it was slang, which she thought such a funny word. And there was bear the noun and bear the verb entirely dissimilar."

"I never half appreciated it," Virginia said, in a surprised tone; "French is certainly easier; I much prefer it as a study."

Virginia had bought a new hat frame, and Marcelle, who had a born knack inherited from her mother for millinery, had offered to cover it. She transferred the lace and burnt orange rosettes from a hat of a passé shape, and lo! a miracle of style and becomingness, Virginia declared joyfully as she tried it on. It matched her black lace gown over burnt orange silk, which with Elizabeth's gift of long white gloves gave her a suitable costume for the little wedding.

Wednesday they set off in one of the doctor's machines; he insisted on sending for them.

"Your relatives will be very proud of you," Virginia told Marcelle, looking at her with appreciative eyes.

“Nonsense!” scoffed the other, but pleased in spite of her tone. Marcelle was far from possessing Virginia’s rare beauty, but her face showed a peculiar strength and interest. Her form was tall and slender, every movement full of grace. Her gown of her favorite pale yellow under dark brown net and a hat of shaded yellows and browns suited her dark, foreign face.

As they drove into the grounds Virginia exclaimed delightedly: “I believe they are going to have the ceremony out of doors!”

There, under a magnificent old oak, was an impromptu altar covered with white linen with flowers and vines above it. The guests were standing or sitting, numbering a few more than Madame had at first intended.

The Duc came to meet them as they alighted. A few moments later came the chaplain in his vestments. A small orchestra concealed by shrubbery played a new and beautiful air unfamiliar to the girls. Then from the side entrance of the château came the two, Madame

in a white silk gown simply made to show her superb figure, the doctor masterful and strong, his tall erect figure as he led his bride reminding one of a soldier. But Virginia's eyes were held by his expression. Happiness did not wholly express it. It was, as Madame would say, "of a reverence." Once before the little altar the solemn service was rendered. After the expressive pause following the benediction, the friends crowded around the two to tender their congratulations.

Virginia was struck afresh by Madame's thought for others. She saw to it that Marcelle was introduced to her cousins, two young girls, a cadet from a military school, and her friends as "our niece, Mademoiselle de Marne."

Virginia glanced quickly at Marcelle as the unaccustomed name fell on her ears, but the girl gave no sign.

"Have you forgotten me, Mademoiselle Hammond?" a high girlish voice demanded at Virginia's elbow, and, turning, she found

herself facing Heloise Maurice, the doctor's stepdaughter.

"What do you think of papa's latest in matrimony?" she asked flippantly.

"If you are speaking of Madame de Campanie, I think that any man is most fortunate to win a woman like her," Virginia answered gravely.

Heloise shrugged. Her black eyes snapped.

"Sophie d'Aventine says that my good times are over now. She has a stepmother, and she is *horrible!* Sophie doesn't mind so much now because she is only at home on the long vacations, and she will marry very young, as I shall."

"Perhaps it is your father's new wife who is to be pitied. I have a stepmother who has always been my best friend."

"Well, it's rather hard luck to have two steps as I have," Heloise went on. "Papa's not so bad, and then I don't see much of him at the convent and his being so busy. His sister chaperones me summers. She's very

easy, but so shocked all the time at what I say and do. She says I'm like what she hears about the worst American children. But I shall be my own mistress before long. I have a *dôt* that will tempt any man; that is, if papa has not dipped into it; he is my guardian. My mother left him a great deal, but men are not always to be trusted where money is concerned; is it not so?"

"Your father has earned a great deal," Virginia said, "but, far more than that, he has a wonderful reputation for skill in his profession. Think of the good he has done and is doing! You ought to be proud to be connected with him."

"Oh, I don't know." The girl's eyes regarded Virginia coolly and deliberately. "He is no god when seen too closely. He can be stern, and he has temper on occasion. Ah, here comes the new mamma! I must make eyes at her, and, as Sister Anne Marthe bade me, have on my prettiest manners."

Virginia with a feeling of repulsion she had

never before felt towards children or younger girls, saw her companion run towards Madame de Thèvenau with eagerness; then when near she curtsied profoundly. Madame put an arm about her as she approached Virginia.

“I hope, my dear, you have met every one,” she said. “We are to have breakfast under the trees out here; I fancied it this glorious weather. I am at last to have a daughter. Virginie, don’t you envy me?”

“I am glad, Madame, that you are to have what you most wish,” Virginia responded, as Heloise modestly cast down her eyes.

A pretty young girl came up to them. “Heloise,” she said, “my mother wishes for you a moment, if Madame will kindly allow you.”

As the two went off Madame held out a small note towards Virginia.

She spoke hurriedly: “It is for Marcelle. I confess to you, Virginie, that I am afraid of her. She is so self-contained, so wise, so . . . what shall I say? . . . so strong in the

mind . . . that I actually shrink from giving her this. Will you kindly do so?"

"Marcelle is determined, Madame, it is true," Virginia laughed, "but she is not at all to be feared. She is just"—the girl spoke earnestly—"a girl after all, but life was for her a hard school when she most needed care and love. She feels as I do, that she must use her musical gift to the utmost, that she holds it in trust."

Madame threw out her beautiful hands in a gesture of abandon. "Thou too, Virginia! I cannot understand these modern ways; I am old-fashioned."

"If you are, Madame, it is a charming fashion," Virginia found herself saying sincerely. "There is Marcelle making a sign," she went on. "She is to sing; is it not so?"

The girls had been quite distressed over their inability to give their friend a wedding gift. It seemed a farce to give her the usual simpler things when she was overwhelmed with them

already; it was out of the question to buy costly gifts.

Then Madame had begged that they do her a great favor, so great she felt backward in asking it; it was not to dance at her wedding but to allow her guests to enjoy their musical gifts. Marcelle stood out in the open and accompanied by Virginia sang a group of Schubert's songs, "Who is Sylvia?" Hahn's "Si mes vers" and A. Goring Thomas' "Song of Sunshine." Then Virginia played Wiehelmi's Polonaise followed at Madame's request by "The Thrush's Wooing." The unexpected recital was a great success. In the midst of the shower of compliments the Duc alone stood aloof: he wished to show Marcelle that he entirely disapproved of her profession, for her at least.

The breakfast out of doors, served at small tables, was charming. Then Virginia slipped away with the bride when she changed into her going-away gown. The maid deftly removed the white gown, and, as she disappeared on

some errand, Madame said under her breath to the girl: "It seemed foolish not to wear my traveling suit to be married in, but Philippe begged for the white — did you see the exquisite necklace he gave me? — and he begged so hard for me not to wear mourning for darling Victoire — the Duc was so shocked, and my friends that I thought I could not persist — but when it is a choice between one's husband-to-be and a brother, it is one's duty to obey the husband. Have you, too, wondered at that, and at my being married so soon? You are, I've heard, more independent in your country. Ah, Virginia, I need Philippe now more than any time, and he needs care and looking after; he is so tired! I never forget my darling boy; sometimes I wish I might have oblivion for weeks; but Philippe says it is braver, if more difficult, to meet such trouble with thought and work for others, and he, alas! knows."

Just before she went down the stairs she turned and took Virginia's hands in hers. "I

felt that I wanted some one young and sweet with me when I prepared to leave my home," she said wistfully; "you, my dear, have done so much for me — Philippe says it is you who have given me to him."

And before the girl could reply, she was half-way down the stairs in her perfectly-made gray suit with her hat of gray silk and pansies, looking in her happiness far younger than her years.

They went off, followed by good wishes and showers of rice. Then the girls, bidding the Duc and the Baronne de Guiche, who had undertaken the rôle of temporary hostess, good-by, were whirled off to Paris.

When at home Virginia gave Marcelle the bride's note. The girl looked up after reading it with a pale, scared face.

"Virginia," Marcelle said, excitedly, "I must be dreaming! Madame writes that she has just placed in the Banque de France the sum of thirty thousand dollars to my credit! I cannot take it. It is not as if it

were from the Duc; it is from her own fortune."

"You must," Virginia cried in a joyful voice. "Ah, Marcelle, I am so thankful for you! I always said that your star would soon be in the ascendant! Behold the prophetess!"

"It is most welcome, and I am very grateful, but"—Marcelle set her lips in a way that reminded Virginia of Alan Kingsbury—"you'll think me horrid, but oh, I want to carve out my own future. I want to earn my own money through my voice. It's my asset, don't you know? And I want to see what I can do with it."

"Well, you can do it just the same, and I—how little I thought that I should ever travel with an heiress!"

"Virginia, do take part of it," urged Marcelle eagerly.

"I cannot. Why, Marcelle, Madame gave it to you, not me. If I ever need money I promise to come to you. Now do let us talk over the wedding. I think it was lovely."

Madame Victoire came in ostensibly to see if the new charwoman had dusted properly. She lingered.

"The wedding of Madame must have been of a beauty most charming?" she ventured.

A heart of stone could not resist the appeal. Virginia's heart being of wax melted. She gave a glowing account of the whole affair even to the breakfast menu, the number of servants, the famous chef, the costumes. Madame, whose life was mostly dull prose, drank in the poetry of this scene from another world with eyes and ears.

"It isn't often in this world," she said, "that the good and great get their deserts until they're dead! But the doctor seems to be getting his; though, of course, he's no longer young, and it may be his happiness comes too late. But the good God will surely have mercy on a man who has cut off so many legs and arms and sewed up so many gashes, and fooled Death a thousand times. They say there are

some who have purgatory here and so escape that in the other world, and surely Monsieur le Docteur had it in his first marriage. Thérèse Crepin was the first of Madame de Thèvenau's maids, and she says that if ever there was a martyr the doctor was one; and if ever there was a nagger and a virago, his wife was both. And her girl was almost as bad — and the doctor so fond of children! Look how he fathered Adrien! Ah! but Thérèse knows! A maid sees and hears things no one else does, and one night when things were the worst and Madame screamed like any plebeian, 'Philippe, thou stone, thou thing of a dumbness, canst thou not speak?' And Monsieur le Docteur as he hurried from the room groaned and said as he passed Thérèse in the dark hall: 'It is my punishment, I must bear it!' As if he ever did wrong! And Thérèse said he worked harder and harder at his cutting, and always he grew more and more famous, but at home was a cancer he could not cure, eating into his heart and home. But hein! the good God

even could no longer endure, and one day he freed Monsieur from the mother, but for reasons best known to himself left the daughter behind!"

"Ah, Madame," Virginia said hastily; "don't let me forget to ask you how to make that new salad you told me about."

And Madame, in her element, fell into the trap and forgot the graver theme.

As the door closed on the voluble landlady the girls looked at each other.

"I feel as if I had helped at a sacrilege," Virginia said; "I tried twice to stop her, but Madame's tongue is as difficult to check as Niagara. I can well believe what she says of Heloise; ah, how I pity Madame! I am glad that the girl will be at school a while longer and not spoil the Paradise of the lovers at the first anyhow!"

"Virginia! you who used to scorn marriage—is it possible that you are growing sentimental?"

"I always believed in it for others; it is only

for myself that I prefer other things as you do."

"Love is a strange monopoly!" Marcelle exclaimed, but her eyes failed to meet Virginia's, and the latter thought in sudden wonder, "She actually seems embarrassed!"

"Virginia, Madame, my aunt, thinks that I should adopt my father's name of de Marne, but I have decided to keep Le Duc. It would confuse matters at this late day to change. My father married under his second name, and I think it best to retain it."

"I wondered what you would do about it," Virginia said; "I believe I agree with you. It would rather complicate matters, and would need so much explanation. Marcelle, do you realize that we are going to really begin our professional life so soon?"

"After all our dreams we are at last to make them realities! We must succeed; do not let us think for a moment that failure is possible!"

CHAPTER VIII

A FEW HAPPENINGS IN THE MOTHER COUNTRY

VIRGINIA rubbed her eyes and looked about the strange room in wonder; then she remembered. She was actually in London. Mr. Van Anden had been fortunate enough to secure their lodging and board with a widowed friend of his sister's on Ryder Street, off St. James. It all seemed unreal to the girl. After so many years of longing and work she was at last realizing her dreams. She could not believe that she had really appeared in concert at Cardiff. It was with a Welch company, but somehow Mr. Van Anden had secured Marcelle and her the chance to appear this once with them. It had been a glorious experience. The Welch musicians, a little cool and critical at first, were, many of them, most cordial and enthusiastic

later. The papers next morning were full of praise and appreciation. The only drawback had been Miss Van Anden. Virginia thought at first that she would always associate Cardiff with her first meeting with a severe, unattractive-looking woman of perhaps thirty-five with the coldest, most disagreeable manner she could imagine. She had tried to thaw her out; but she refused to melt. The girls dreaded the rehearsal. She accompanied them as they feared: execution faultless, but no sympathy, nothing *en rapport*. They were silent until they were alone.

"Mark my words, Virginia Hammond, we're going to have trouble with that woman!" Marcelle declared.

"She isn't promising," Virginia assented, "but we are in for it now and must do our level best. I am not going to fail on her account, and Mr. Van Anden seems all right."

"Yes, he seems straight," Marcelle said, with emphasis on the verb, "but I don't trust

men very readily; I have seen too much of them."

"Of the ignoble type," corrected Virginia.

"Yes," agreed the other; "but it will take many pleasanter experiences to erase the impression. It has sunk too deeply."

"Now I have known the other kind chiefly; so there is a better type. I can't bear to have you think that way, Marcelle, though I know you have had reason. I am bound to think that both Mr. Van Anden and his sister are fair and straight and agreeable. As a child I used to love to pretend, and I am going to now with all my might."

"You may pretend, but facts are stubborn things, and Drusilla Van Anden is a fact. She is going to prove a thorn in this proposition that will pierce through whatever armor we may use."

Virginia was so absorbed in her thoughts as she lay there that she started at the light rap on her door and Marcelle came in. Virginia had never seen her so excited. Her usually

pale cheeks were pink, her dark eyes shone, her pretty rose-colored kimono had been hastily thrown about her.

"I could not wait another minute," she announced. "Oh, Virginia, I've been reading the morning papers Mr. Van Anden sent, and they're just dandy. The *Times* praises you the most, but the *Daily Mail* says more about me. The *Standard* gives us each a big puff."

Virginia sprang out of bed.

"Oh, give them to me; I can't believe that London approves of us until I see it in black and white!"

She seized upon the *Times* and read aloud: "The new American artists who appeared at the St. James last night were a surprise to many of the large audience. It is not too much to say that for two decades at least there has not been such a violinist in London as Miss Hammond. Her technique is marvelous, but it is her temperament, her exquisite understanding, which gives to her rendition a meaning all her own; in fact, her varied *repertoire*,

her masterly touch, her rare communion with her instrument as if they were one, make her not the talented, pleasing performer we expected to find, but a genius. Usually Miss Hammond's beauty of face and form would alone give her prominence, but when to this is added her great musical gift, we exclaim that the gods have been kind to mortals. 'The Coming of the King,' her own creation, shows rare promise, and we understand that another composition is almost completed which surpasses this in breadth of vision and charm of melody. Miss Le Duc's voice is also far above the average. Her high notes are singularly clear and sweet, her execution showing the careful training of Herr Schmidt of Berlin, her latest instructor. Her lack — if one may criticise so beautiful a soprano — is too much restraint, lack of feeling. While an American, she is of noble French descent on her father's side, and shows it in her refined, high-bred appearance. The piano accompanist, Miss Van Anden, while technically correct, leaves much

to be desired in her lack of sympathy, her wooden interpretation, her mechanical touch."

"I wish they hadn't said that!" Virginia exclaimed. "Think how it will make her feel!"

"But do wait while I tell you this before I read you the *Daily Mail* and the others. Lady Farrington has written me the loveliest note, inviting us both to spend the week-end with her at her home, number forty Belgrave Square. She is a friend of the Duc's and Madame de Thèvenau."

"Marcelle, pinch me; do you think we dare go? Shall we disgrace our name and country? Shall we use our knives and spoons for forks? It may be a far worse ordeal than last night."

"This is Friday and we leave Monday. I believe Mr. Van Anden will allow us to go, as it will save his pocket, Virginia; meals, bed and board minus — think of his surprise and joy! They are to send or come for us in an automobile at two, so we haven't much time. I shall

read you the *Daily Mail* while you hurry your elaborate toilet. Oh, what a bonanza that we have good clothes! One ought to rise superior and live above such mundane trifles, but it takes genius, so I am exempt, not you! Hear! 'The musical entertainment at St. James' hall proved a rare treat to the large audience there assembled. Miss Hammond has the reputation of being one of Camondreau's favorite pupils. He predicts for her a great future, and surely last night's performance gave promise of it. She handles the bow with the skill and ease of a maestro. Her "Concerstuck," of Saint-Saëns, Sindays' "(a) Cantus doloris, op. 78," and Wieniawski's "Scherzo — Tarantelle," were perhaps the most striking. But Miss Le Duc's voice was equally wonderful. Her high soprano, while sweet, was unusually strong. In Verdi's beautiful aria, "Ah fors e lui!" her fine training under Herr Schmidt of Berlin, came to the fore, while Mrs. Beach's "The Year's At The Spring," was exquisitely tender, *simpatica*. The artists' youth made the sur-

prise of their unique gifts complete. Name and fame are only a question of time, during which they may be heard by the world. America should be proud of such exceptional talent and beauty.'

"The *Daily News* and *Telegraph* are somewhat similar to the other two. The *Standard* is more moderate," Marcelle said hurriedly. "I must dress and see Mr. Van Anden."

They had a simple lunch, received the ready permission of their manager, and were barely in time to meet Lady Farrington in the sitting-room. She proved to be a sweet-faced, motherly, plump woman, not at all overwhelming or awe inspiring. The tall, solemn-faced man by her side was far more so.

"My son, Lord Farrington," his mother announced.

"We thought," the latter said in his slow drawl, "that as you have so little time you might prefer to see some of the sights this afternoon."

The girls were delighted. All was new and



“SUDDENLY SHE WAS AWARE OF SOME ONE NEAR HER”

interesting to them. Saturday afternoon they drove out to Windsor, and Virginia wished to see the desire of her childish days, the Crystal Palace. They drove through the thoroughfares heretofore merely names associated with the past, Piccadilly, Regent's Park, Pall Mall, Holborn, Fleet Street, then home for dinner. Sunday they went to morning service at Westminster and to St. Paul's in the evening. The music at both was good, but at the former they were too far back in the vast space to hear the sermon.

Lord Farringdon was, if rather solemn, very attentive. Saturday morning Virginia took her letters to read to a small but charming room opening off the large library. After reading them she fell to thinking of home, of her present success and of how delighted Ma and Elizabeth would be over it all. Suddenly she was aware of some one near her. It was a little old man carefully groomed, with white hair and erect of bearing. Virginia was struck with a peculiarity about his eyes.

"Is any one in this room?" he asked in a low, pleasant voice.

"Yes, it is Virginia Hammond, the American guest. May I ask your name?"

"I am a brother of Lady Farrington's,—the Honorable Leigh Berkeley. I am blind." His voice sank lower and he said eagerly: "I have heard of your wonderful playing; Fleming read it to me in the papers. I used to be crazy over the violin: I love music. How I wish I might have heard you!"

"You must hear me this evening. My friend, Miss Le Duc, and I are to give an informal recital in the drawing-room to your sister, Lord Farrington and a few friends."

"I should love to hear you," the other said wistfully, "but I never go into society any more. No one wants an old man about who is totally blind."

"I do," Virginia said promptly, "and I'm sure your sister does. You must come. I shall refuse to play if you stay away."

"No, no, you are most kind, but it would

never do, never. Lord Farrington would not like it at all. I must go back. I must have mistaken the direction as Fleming had left me. I have not yet learned to be very skillful."

"Can you not stay? I should like to talk with you," Virginia assured him.

"And tell me of your country? I know so little of it, it would be a great pleasure. But I must not intrude. I bid you good-morning; it has brightened the day —"

"I was looking for you, Miss"—Lord Farrington stood in the doorway with a look of surprise on his rather heavy features. As Virginia glanced at him she saw the expression change to one of intense annoyance.

The little man, eager, apologetic, hastened to say: "I mistook the way; I was just going, Reginald."

"I shall ring for Fleming; he must attend to his duties better or I shall discharge him." His nephew's voice held a note new to Virginia. She resented both voice and manner.

"I have been urging your uncle to stay," she

interposed. "I find that he is very fond of music. He must hear our recital this evening."

Lord Farrington had crossed the room to the bell. He turned to say rather sharply: "My uncle is old and feeble; he keeps very early hours. He has long ago given up all social pleasures."

Virginia's eyes, keen, observant, saw the change in the Honorable Leigh Berkeley's face from a wistful eagerness to an expression of hopelessness.

"I am sure that it would do him no harm, as the recital begins directly after dinner. Don't you think that he might come as my guest?"

"Of course, if you put it in that way, he must be present." Lord Farrington's words were suave but his looks belied them. "Fleming," he said, as an irreproachable valet appeared, "I fear you are growing careless. Your charge is here where he is never allowed. If you cannot attend to your duties better you will be replaced by some one who can."

The man bowed and led the blind man away.

Virginia did not like the expression of his eyes. She wondered if he were kind to the gentle old man.

Lord Farrington changed the subject at once. He exerted himself to be pleasant. He led the way to the library to show her a landscape by Collins. Just as they reached it, a young fellow in uniform fairly burst into the room.

"Hello, Reggie, I'm home again; where's the mater? I can't find her. It does seem good to be here, don't you know"—he stopped abruptly at sight of Virginia. "I beg your pardon, I thought my brother was alone," he apologized.

Virginia liked the fair, frank, boyish face.

"How abrupt you are, Bertie. My brother, Miss Hammond, Captain Albert of the Navy. How are you, old chap? We didn't expect you so soon." They shook hands.

"We beat the record this time; voyage fine; must find mother"; and, with a military salute to Virginia, he was off.

"I didn't know your brother was in the Navy," Virginia said.

"Oh, yes; that, the Army and the church are about all there are for younger sons," observed the elder indifferently. "He is the youngest. I have two married sisters."

"Don't younger sons ever do mechanical things, or go into business or law or medicine?" Virginia asked, astonished.

"Now and then in the professions, but never in trade unless they're willing to lose caste. I understand that in your country it is all different. I don't see how you get along without titles or hereditary estates or family."

Virginia smiled, thinking of Aunt Henrietta. "Oh, we believe in family, though not to your extent. You must remember that you English once settled in America."

"Yes, that must be a great comfort to you," said Lord Farrington solemnly. "It is a pity we could not have stayed longer."

"Everything from one's point of view; now we felt that we could do better alone, and we've

managed to toddle along very well considering." Virginia smiled again, but the other looked at her with compassion.

"I suppose from your looks, my lord, that you're thinking, 'Where ignorance is bliss, etc.'"

"How you do read one's thoughts, Miss Hammond. I was telling Mother last night that you and Miss Le Duc were very bright and quick. I don't see how you do it."

"It is pretty hard work, but we Americans are seldom lazy so we peg along till we get there."

"I suppose there's a joke somewheres, but I don't find it yet, though we're really not so bad as your comic papers and cartoons paint us. We may be rather too earnest, but that is much better than to be light and volatile."

The afternoon was decidedly more lively with the addition of the member of the Navy to their party of sightseers. Lady Farrington's usually calm, sweet face was more animated, and she seemed quite wakened up. Captain Bertie

told all kinds of interesting incidents of his naval life in a boyish, offhand way. His happiness over his home-coming bubbled over. The girls exclaimed to each other when they were alone over the striking difference between the brothers.

After dinner Lady Farrington's few invited guests came. Three sisters, the Honorable the Misses Nottingham, two young friends in the Navy of Captain Bertie's, and the former's aunt, Lady Radcliffe, and two elderly men, who, Lord Farrington told Virginia, had been fine musicians in their younger days; one, Mr. Weston, an organist, and the other, Mr. Llewellyn, a flute player above the common.

"And why should they give it all up now?" questioned Virginia.

"They are pretty well along; the old are out of the race," the young lord said pompously.

"So you seem to think, but I don't," the girl dissented in her decisive voice. "My friend at home, Mrs. Jordan, has two friends both eighty and over, and they are charming. One

keeps up a large correspondence and reads everything, the other is a fine talker and goes out a great deal. And I know a man you would call old who fiddles well, and his wife his age can dance on occasion." Virginia thought how shocked her companion would be over the levity of her humble Irish friends, the Flahertys, and wanted to laugh.

But it was time for her to play instead. All at once, on looking over the guests, she missed the Honorable Leigh Berkeley.

"Where is your uncle?" she demanded.

"I decided that he had better not come," Lord Farrington informed her curtly.

"Then you consider promises only to be broken," Virginia observed icily.

"Well, really, Miss Hammond, it isn't best, and it doesn't do to establish a precedent, you know. I am head of this house, and I must lay down its rules or else all would be confusion."

"I'm sorry you have so decided," Virginia said coolly, "for I dislike dreadfully disap-

pointing your mother and her guests; but I told your uncle that if he wasn't here I would not play, and I am in the habit of keeping my word; so you must explain my inability to give my part of the entertainment."

"Do you really mean what you say?" demanded her host, looking at the beautiful girl in her becoming old rose gown, in something like fear. "You surely won't be so unreasonable."

"It seems to me the unreasonableness is on the other side," Virginia told him, looking at him calmly. "To me it seems worse than unreasonable to prevent a man like your uncle from having what to him is a rare pleasure, when his life is already so pitifully limited, with everything which to him is desirable denied him." The girl's voice lost its calm towards the end and trembled with indignation.

"I see that he has every care," Lord Farrington informed her with an air of injured virtue; "but I see my mother coming to remind us that it is past the hour. May I ask you not

to announce your decision for a few moments, Miss Hammond? I shall see what can be done."

Virginia had not imagined that her noble host could or would move his lordly legs in such undue haste as he fairly ran from the room.

"I say, it's awfully good of you to do this for the mater — I was just telling Miss Le Duc — and we do appreciate it. It will be something to hand down to future generations, don't you know?" The Captain was looking at Virginia with such honest open admiration in his eyes that hers fell before it in embarrassment. Then something in his glance of amazed incredulity made her turn. Lord Farrington was coming into the room leading with careful attention the Honorable Leigh Berkeley.

"Suffering Moses! how did that come about?" exclaimed the Captain in amazement. "Reggie is to see to you, Miss Hammond, and I believe if you'll excuse me, I'll sit by my uncle. He's a dear old fellow, and it's such hard lines to be blind, don't you know? I

thought that he couldn't come to-night and I'm so glad that he did, for it will be a big red letter night in his life, you can't think."

Dignified, grave, but with a reproachful glance at Virginia, Lord Farrington made his little speech, ponderous, slow and, as Marcelle wickedly whispered to her friend, "of a thickness that she feared he would not wade through before dawn." But it was over, and Virginia played all Marcelle's accompaniments, as there was no available pianist. Marcelle accompanied the other on the piano for two of her simpler numbers. Virginia played several beautiful airs of a by-gone time for the ears of her blind listener alone. Marcelle ended with a group of three negro dialect songs, the words by the American writer, Anne Virginia Culbertson, which she had set to lilting melodies: "Miss Sally-Gal," "Answerin' the Mocking Bird" and "In Sorghum Time." These caught the fancy of the audience, conventional though it was, and Captain Bertie applauded energetically. As soon as she was

free Virginia went over to the blind listener. "My dear," he said in his high-bred, gentle voice; "you have genius, and will, please God, give joy and comfort to many sad hearts in your life; but you have a greater thing, a big warm heart. I shall never forget you nor this evening in the few years that are left to me."

"It is time to go, sir." Fleming's voice, obsequious, yet to Virginia's ears covertly impertinent, broke in on the old gentleman's happy hour. She tried to speak in vain. The pathos of his life pierced her heart. Her voice was full of unshed tears. Then the Captain's voice: "Not yet, Fleming," and he was introducing his uncle to the guests. Later came another voice, authoritative, tacitly reproving, "Fleming, my uncle is tired; you know how feeble he is — take him at once to his room."

Marcelle's eyes saw the sudden flush come to the sensitive face. She saw him turn to the organist with whom he was having an animated talk, and heard him say with dignity: "I must

deny myself further enjoyment, Mr. Weston, and go to my room. Lord Farrington is solicitous for my health." Was he gently ironical?

CHAPTER IX

MARRIAGE IN ITS RELATION TO DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

SUNDAY morning Virginia was made to feel that she was not yet forgiven. Her host was courteous but held aloof, and devoted himself to Marcelle. Virginia was delighted, as it gave her a chance to know his brother better. She liked him more and more. Now and then he reminded her of Theodore.

"It seems a shame for you to have seen so little of London," he observed, as they came back from a long drive. "Aren't you coming again on your way back?"

"Yes, Miss Le Duc and I have planned to spend a week here when our itinerary is over," Virginia told him.

"Why can't you spend the time with us?" Lady Farrington asked.

The girls responded gratefully, but Virginia made up her mind that they would be much more independent to be in lodgings and free to go and come as they chose. She found Lord Farrington's eyes upon her as if reading her thoughts.

For the rest of the visit he was as attentive as before.

Monday they joined their manager and his sister at the station en route for Edinburgh. At once Miss Van Anden began: "I told my brother that I supposed after visiting such swell people you would feel it very much to come down to common mortals."

"Well, we'll try to bear up under it," Virginia responded laughingly. "It was a pleasant experience; but, after all, we came on the trip to work, not play."

"Work *and* play," corrected the other; "for you and I do that, if my part is so badly done." The girls pretended not to hear, but she persisted: "I suppose you and Miss Le Duc feel very superior to me because you are praised so

highly in the papers and I am criticised so unfairly. It has been so all my life, but my turn will come. It won't be long, either. My brother doesn't call you a genius, Miss Hammond, if Camondreau and the *Times* do, and he is a fine musical critic. He wrote for several papers for years, and has heard good music all his life."

Marcelle walked off in disdain, but Virginia said, in her pleasantest voice: "What the press says of us, Miss Van Anden, we cannot help or hinder. I agree with your brother that I am not a genius. Do please try and like us, for it's going to be intensely unpleasant if we are antagonistic. The trip will not last long, and then we shall part."

The other did not reply, and the train coming in, the little party hurried off.

All during the journey Miss Van Anden was sullen and unresponsive. Her brother seemed ill at ease. He talked long and earnestly to her.

The recital was to take place at Operetta

House, Chambers Street, but it was such a success that Mr. Van Anden decided to try a second, which was equally well attended.

It was at Glasgow that Virginia received a letter that was, to say the least, surprising. It was the morning after the recital that she had an interview with a woman by the name of Cairngorm. She informed Virginia at the outset that her husband was a very rich man who had made a mint of money by quarrying stone.

“We wasn’t always rich, and I’ve never entertained at all. I’m English and my husband’s Scotch; but I want to give something seclusive and extraordinary. So I’m going to have fifty guests and have you play — I don’t care much for the other girl — and I’m goin’ to pay you a big sum for it, and I’m goin’ to have it in the papers just what I pay. I’ll give you a hundred pounds for the evening.”

“I couldn’t take so much,” protested Virginia, but the other silenced her. “I never did tell lies, an’ I ain’t goin’ to begin now, an’ I’ve

told everybody. Nobody can laugh at me this time. My man's generous, an' he says, 'Go ahead,' sez he, 'if it costs five hundred pounds, I'll back you.' "

"I shall have to bring my accompanist," Virginia said, after a little thought. "Let me give some of the money to her."

"No, I'll give her twenty-five. I don't think much of her poundin'; but if I must, I must."

So they went, Miss Van Anden only partly mollified. It was a very mixed and funny affair, but Virginia enjoyed it as she did almost all of her experiences, and was glad of the extra large fee. Marcelle pretended to feel bowed down over the slight the stone quarry man's wife had given her. She wore a black gown to supper, and said she would never hold up her head again.

Miss Van Anden looked at her in dismay. She did not understand how any one could joke over such a slight and said so.

"My turn will come," Marcelle declared, and

then grew quite red in the face, remembering too late that she was unconsciously quoting Miss Van Anden.

The next day Virginia received the letter. It bore the coat of arms of the Farringdons, a leopard *couchant* with a man in armor standing over it with drawn sword and the legend "I conquer all obstacles." The chirography was small and carefully written, and was signed Reginald Alpheus Howard Lord Farrington.

"I wonder what he wants of me," thought the violinist. "I wish he might engage us to give a series of recitals, I'm getting so mercenary."

The letter ran thus:

"My dear Miss Hammond:

"You will doubtless be surprised to receive any communication from me, and still further after reading its contents. I flatter myself that I kept my feelings under such perfect control when you were with us that you did not suspect that for the first time in my life I was

in love. It was so without precedent in my experience that I did not understand or approve of a state of mind which did not appeal to my reason or judgment. As you I know realize, a man in my position must carefully weigh matrimony and look at it from all points of view. It is no light matter for one of my rank to choose his mate, a mother for future generations of Farringdons. My mother and I had long ago talked over the matter and always with a woman of my own land in view. You can then imagine my intense surprise and dismay when almost at first sight I had feelings towards you which worried and upset me. I have lived a correct and even existence. I had carefully planned my future even to selecting the English girl I was to unite with in marriage, a girl of my own rank, with a fortune which is larger than mine. Then, with no premonition of coming events, I found myself carried away by an American of no family, no fortune or rank, who earned her living by playing for money in public. No wonder that I

was afraid to give rein to my feelings. I determined to let you go and find out if absence would not cool my ardor and restore my usual intelligent rationalism. It has been a week to-day since you left and I am in a fever of unrest and discontent. I am not, and fear that I shall never be content, unless you are my wife. I have not consulted my mother at this momentous step. I've decided to follow my own impulses, rash and imprudent though they be. For a while — a few hours — I must say my whole system received a shock when you resented my authority as to my uncle's actions, but I am sure that when once we are married, my dear Virginia, you will recognize that the husband is the head of the house, and the wife is the hand controlled and guided by said head. I must not forget to add that as Lady Farringdon you will, of course, renounce all thought of your professional career, and indeed I should prefer that you never used your musical gift save for our immediate family and relatives. I hope that in thinking over this offer of my

hand and heart you will not feel either an overwhelming gratitude or a too great modesty as to your own limitations. Other men have raised the women they love to a high position; why not your lover,

“REGINALD ALPHEUS HOWARD

“LORD FARRINGTON.”

Virginia looked up from the perusal of this effusion with the light of battle in her eye. Her brother Bob, whom she had rigorously coached in correct English minus slang, would have been overjoyed to have heard his elder sister's remarks.

“Well, this is the limit! His colossal conceit is simply fierce! Reginald Alpheus Howard Lord Farrington, something is coming to you that will make you sit up and take notice. Imagine me sitting with folded hands in his conventional, well-ordered, monotonous household and waiting patiently for my lord's daily commands! I believe I will marry him for his own punishment, and to give that dear old uncle

of his the time of his life; but the price is too high."

The evening post carried southward the following reply:

"My dear Lord Farrington:

"I cannot see how or why you received the impression that I would be eager to become Lady Farrington. Nothing was further from my thoughts. In the first place, I am wedded to my violin and my profession, for which I have longed and studied with an ardor that you in your life of ease and indolence cannot even faintly comprehend. Then if I had not that reason, I have always declared that I would if I ever married choose an American, who as a nation are the only husbands worth while. Thirdly, if these reasons were null and void, I could not marry one who goes against my cherished ideals and conception of a man. My husband, if I ever have one, which I doubt, must be chivalric towards the weak and suffering, just as well as loving towards his wife;

not only high in honor and integrity but considerate and generous. Our ideas, our environment, our upbringing have been far too different for us to ever be congenial as friends, much less in that most intimate relation which marriage means. Just the attitude you take towards your uncle would alone prove to me that we never could agree on subjects which to me seem vital.

“I do not wish to hurt your feelings, Lord Farrington, but as you have been frank with me I feel that it is your due that I deal candidly with you. I am sure that you meant your offer to be an honor, and as such I thank you even while assuring you that it would be a rank impossibility and bring only disaster to both of us.

“Very sincerely,

“VIRGINIA HAMMOND.”

Marcelle came in as she finished.

“Virginia, I don’t wish to be unduly observant, but you look slightly stirred. Is the

subject of a pleasant or unpleasant nature? A proposal, a legacy, or has your best man run off with another girl?"

But Virginia did not smile.

"I have had the honor of refusing to be Lady Farrington," she said impatiently.

"Did his lordship really get up his nerve to do and dare so unconventional a thing as to propose marriage to the humble, nameless violinist? I saw that he was heels over head in love with you and that the struggle was on, but whether his head and hereditary conscience or his suddenly rampageous heart would win I could not determine."

"Did you really think that he was taken with me? I don't call it 'in love.' I never read such a letter. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Such egotism, such self-centered narrowness I never imagined! I should think college life would have taken it out of him."

"Some people, Virginia, can't broaden or develop," Marcelle declared with her air of wisdom gained in a school of which Virginia knew

nothing. "They see every one and everything through a pair of invisible spectacles of the 'big I' make. I knew a man and his wife in Berlin who had traveled around the world and seen all kinds of people, and they were as selfish and petty and mean as if they had lived in a rut all their lives: and I knew a woman who had never been able to leave Berlin since her birth, and she read and helped others and knew more of human nature than most people."

"Ma used to say 'the Kingdom of God is within us,' yet some folks go all their lives seeking for it in out of the way places or talking as if it meant a future state — oh, how I wish I could see that blessed woman this minute!" Virginia sighed and the tears came to her eyes.

"Here's another," Marcelle said. She had visited Virginia's home once and lost her heart to the girl's motherly large-hearted stepmother. "But really, Virginia, I feel that I ought to counsel you not to throw away what may be the

chance of a lifetime," she went on gravely, "for even geniuses, my dear, are seldom rich or allied to titles. Pause and reflect. There are worse men than poor Reggie. He hasn't humbleness of mind, but how few of his sex have; he is rather conceited, but great minds have been that; he is a Cæsar in the Englishman's castle, his home, yet Napoleon insisted on ruling his domestic affairs or thought he did —"

"Marcelle, if you ever mention my lord again, you'll get this." Virginia picked up a light chair and swung it in her strong arms as if about to hurl it at the other's head. Marcelle dodged.

"Virginia, you often seem mild, but one must live with persons to really know them. I pity your husband if you ever find him doing a mean or contemptible thing! I would not put it past you to commit a crime at the proper pitch."

"Best not indulge in the luxury; prevention better than cure," Virginia retorted.

“ You young women evidently think that we have time to burn. We have work to do, and can’t waste the hours talking on frivolous subjects. Do you realize that we are due at Paisley this evening? ” It was the sarcastic voice of Miss Van Anden from the open door of the room. Her eyes snapped, anger showed in the pose of her head, the expression of her mouth, her whole bristling attitude. As she turned away, Marcelle said: “ I wonder if she is ever happy; I declare, I begin to see your side of it and feel sorry for her.”

“ Think of living with such a soul in you and never getting away from it! ” Virginia exclaimed. “ Reggie is rather nice beside her! ”

“ You’re weakening, I see.” Marcelle sent her parting shot as she flew to get ready for their trip.

Virginia had always associated Paisley with the shawls of that name. Hereafter it was to have a more personal association. After the recital there a note was handed to her addressed in a sprawling, uncultivated hand,

"Miss Hammond.

"DEAR MISS:

"Will you see me in the parlor of your hotel at ten to-morrow morning on important business? I shall arrange that for the short time we're there we have the strictest privacy.

"Yours truly,

"SANDY McNULTY."

"I declare, I am green with jealousy!" Marcelle exclaimed. "Perhaps it's another to use your fiddle for a social function, and that, like Mrs. Stonequarry, he doesn't care for the other girl."

"I think it more likely that Virginia has been flirting with some man who is to call her to account for it. I did not at all approve of her going about with young men as she did in London," observed Miss Van Anden severely.

As Virginia entered the room next day a tall, gaunt figure rose from his seat. She was reminded of a whimsical tale she used to read to Bob and Janet of a boy who longed and

prayed to grow big at once so that he might do just as he pleased, and after taking a convenient fairy potion he suddenly shot up in instantaneous growth to the ceiling.

“I’ll not tak yer time, Miss Hammond,” Sandy McNulty began at once. “Ye’re busy fiddlin’ an’ I’m busy plowin’ an’ workin’ on my fairm. I heard ye playin’ the noight an’ I was fair astounded. I niver heard a fiddle could talk as that one did. Now I’ve always been a mon that mak’s trades that’ll better my condeetion, an’ I thought it out whiles you played an’ the other sang; here’s a girl who sings full weel, but as a steady everyday thing she’d be fair tiresome, but here’s the other who couldn’t play whiles she worked so there’d be quiet in the hoose an’ music for luxury. Her looks, too, are pleasin’ above the ordinary, an’ though the gude book tells us beauty is vain, it doesna deny it’s a pleasure to the eye: an’ weel, Miss Hammond, whiles I’ve conseedered marryin’ as fallin’ from the fryin’ pan intil the fire, I made up my moind to fall, an’ ask ye to

marry me. I'm a fair mon an' I'll mak' ye a fair offer. I'd give ye three shillin's the week, maybe four, lucky years, for bawdies an' waste, an' that'd mak' up for the pennies ye'd earn by fiddlin'. Yer meals an' a fair hoose of six rooms, a gown now an' then when what you have fails; an' seein' ye have looks an' music the laird's lady might hev ye to the castle forbye — I'm tenant for the Laird of Dumfrieshire. An' would ye bide an' go with me to the meenister as soon as I see to a license? I haven't had time to find out aboot the law, but I don't think it would delay us. I cud tak' ye oot in Jamie Cairns' cart for a slim sum."

He paused for the first time. Virginia said gravely:

"Mr. McNulty, I appreciate the honor you pay me, your courage and generosity, but I have considered matrimony for several years, and while I feel that it may do for some it is not for me. I am wedded to my fiddle, and while you, for instance, may prove a good investment,

the returns are too far in the future. My violin, on the other hand, is what we Americans call a sure thing. It brings me in a good income, and you have heard the old saying, 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,' so I must refuse your kind offer."

Sandy McNulty, hat in hand, shifted from one foot to the other, and drew himself up till he towered far above the girl.

"I'll not deny your answer is a disappointment, Miss Hammond. I would even have bought you a new table for the parlor an' put in a better pump in the kitchen if your answer had been more favorable. But I must say your conclusion shows a level head and a business turn the same as myself. It is, as we might say, a blow to posterity too, for with a pair of heads of a thrifty turn, what might not the McNultys to come bring about in the lang run? However, tak' your toime. If yer moind tak's a turn in the next six months or a year even, let me know. I'll bid ye good-by the day."

As the door closed behind him Virginia sank into a chair and let the laughter so long pent up have way. "There's one thing sure, I am having samples of courtship not found in modern or ancient romances — certainly not in books of etiquette — but I don't believe I shall ever have another like this one if I live to be a hundred," she decided.

They sailed from Greenock to Belfast, and made such good time with a fair sea that they reached there hours before they intended. As if to put in the time, as the girls sat in a tiny sitting-room adjoining their bedroom, a card was brought to them announcing the advent of Captain Albert Edward Farrington, H.M.N. "I am sure I am not wanted; he's an emissary from his brother, though he must have used an aeroplane to reach us so quickly. The Van Andens asked me to drive with them so that I shall vanish."

And, in spite of Virginia's remonstrances, Marcelle was gone, and a moment later, as fresh and well-groomed, as boyish and winning

as he had been when she had left him in London, Virginia was welcoming the brother of Lord Farrington.

CHAPTER X

A LOVER WON, A LOVER LOST

ARE you surprised to see me, Miss Hammond? ”

“ It is rather unexpected,” Virginia replied, as she shook hands; “ though in these days nothing ought to be. I hardly thought we would see you till we were again in London.”

He sat down with the air of having been there a little while before.

“ My leave is up next week, and as you told my mother of your itinerary in your letter, I figured it out that you would be in Belfast to-day or to-morrow. Thank heaven, I found you alone! I fear, Miss Hammond, that I have come on a wildgoose chase, but I had to undertake it. You see, I tried to think that it was no use, but after you left I found how

serious was my condition. I know that a girl like you, gifted far beyond the ordinary, beautiful, independent, would not be likely to fancy a chap like me, a younger son, off at sea most of the time, with no wealth; but I had to know. Miss Hammond, I love you dearly; I feel that life without you will be a very drab existence. Is there any hope?"

He looked at her — eager, handsome, pleading. Virginia's heart turned cold within her.

"Oh, Captain Bertie, I'm so sorry, but I fear there isn't. I don't believe I know how to love anything or anybody except my family or profession. Yet I care so much for you I wonder why I can't go further. If I did, your roving life, your being a younger son, would be nothing. It is hard to hurt you; I wish that I might say yes, but I can't and be just to myself or you."

The Captain's ruddy face paled, but his direct eyes looked into hers.

"Don't blame yourself, dear; you deserve so much more than I can give you. Years ago

a maiden aunt left me a modest fortune. Though often tempted, I have left it untouched, I hoped now it would be for you. You ought to have the title, but my brother cannot follow his inclinations. He is bound to marry according to our traditions. Thank fortune, I am more independent, though, of course, I suppose I ought to think more of such things. I only think of you, my darling. Virginia, don't you think that you might learn to love me? Consent to write to me, let me try to win you that way; let us have a sort of an understanding, not a binding engagement, that if in a year you still feel that marriage and love are out of the question, that will settle it. Don't send me off on a long voyage with a definite refusal! You say you care for me; how do you know that the feeling may not increase with time? Give me a chance. Do let me have that much hope, won't you? "

The girl wavered, hesitated. She felt that she could not bring needless pain to the honest clear eyes fixed upon her so appealingly. He

seemed so very young, yet he was three years her senior. Why turn her back on all that his desires promised her? Why not grant his far from exacting request? She put her hand in his.

“I will do as you say, only it must not be a betrothal, remember, nothing binding.”

His rapturous expression gave her a guilty feeling.

“Oh, don’t hope, Captain Bertie, I am so uncertain; and you must remember that my heart is set on my profession.”

“Well, you needn’t give it up. I shall be away so much, and while wives often follow their husbands, you can many times go on tour as you are doing now.”

“If your brother objected would that make any difference — to my profession, I mean?”

The first cloud came over the flushed, eager face.

“Well, of course, Reggie is the head of the house, and we feel bound to listen to him; but I’m almost sure he would not insist, he seemed

to enjoy your wonderful playing so much; and if he did, I think I could make him see your point of view. Do you know that it seems hardly fair to you to urge your taking a plain fellow like me? I feel that you ought to be Lady Farringdon — what a glorious one you'd make! And Reggie is a fine fellow with so much more to him than I. He is so sane and calm, and I'm always plunging into things pell mell. I'm so impulsive and impatient."

"I much prefer you to your brother's type," Virginia declared with emphasis.

"Well, I shan't quarrel with your preference, though I wonder at your taste. Oh, Virginia — may I call you that? — I must leave in the morning and you must play this evening, there's so little time left."

"But there are the letters; are you a good correspondent?"

"No, I've always chafed over letter-writing; but it will be different now. I shall have every incentive to improve. You don't know how happy you've made me. You are so lovely

it gives me joy just to think of you! I never knew such a girl. You're sweet yet strong, utterly unconscious and unspoiled, independent yet womanly; how dare I ask so much of you, I, a mere ordinary man?"

Virginia hoped most devoutly that Marcelle and the others would return. She found it very difficult to hold her lover to their compact, but she told herself that she must not be too rigid when his time was so short, when, after all, she was withholding so much.

"I don't want to seem meddling, Captain," she said very earnestly, "but I am not at all satisfied as to your uncle's welfare. I know that he has everything necessary for his bodily wants, but oh, the other side would mean so much more to me! Blindness has always seemed unbearable. I long for him to have more diversion, more interests. I may be wrong, but I don't like Fleming. I know that you are at home so little, but couldn't you talk to your mother and your brother, and have better, brighter conditions for him?"

Again the cloud on the Captain's face.

"I have talked to Reggie and so has the Mater, but he doesn't look at it as we do. I spoke to him again after you left, when I saw how the dear old fellow enjoyed your recital and meeting others, but Reggie has always been rather easily upset, don't you know? He says that it is exceedingly annoying to him to see any illness or unpleasant things, and that the very thought of my uncle, helpless, groping, sets his teeth on edge. He orders things for his comfort, but he doesn't want to meet him. Why, even when the Mater is ill he won't go near her till she is up and about, and when I had pneumonia he left the house. He says I can't understand how sensitive a deep nature like his is to such things, as I'm so volatile and on the surface —"

"Sensitive!" Virginia burst forth, unable to keep silence any longer. "He means selfish. I cannot understand why you all seem to feel as you do about your brother. You, people of intelligence, seem to become suddenly mere

puppets to be pulled by Lord Farrington's wires just because he is, as you say, the head of the house and bears the title."

The other looked at her with puzzled brows.

"Does it seem that way to you? All our friends, or most of them, have the same point of view, and I've always been brought up to it. When younger sons and even daughters in two instances kicked the traces, it made no end of a row, and everybody was so uncomfortable and upset. My father pointed out the incidents as an object lesson to my sisters and me. But about Fleming, I think you're right, and I believe I can do something there. If Reggie isn't disturbed he won't mind a change of valets, and I don't believe if he took time to think about it that he likes Fleming himself."

And then the others came in to run over a few things they were to give that evening, and Captain Bertie, unable to talk to the girl of his heart, was content to watch and listen. He saw very little of her before he left. The eve-

ning performance was later than usual, the program longer. The next morning at nine the Captain took the steamer for England. They all went down to the pier to see him off, Miss Van Anden's keen, watchful eyes fixed suspiciously on the two. He had only one chance before he left of saying: "Do your best, dear, to try to like me, and remember that while there are far worthier men, not one would try harder than I to deserve you and to make you happy."

They all stood watching the vessel steam away, Virginia asking herself: "What have I done? I ought not to have given him so much hope. Yet what girl would not be drawn towards such a straightforward, winning personality?"

At the same time her manager was saying to Marcelle, with what she called his growling voice: "Well, I am glad the fellow's gone. Miss Hammond's playing was not equal to her best last night."

"You are very exacting not to feel satisfied

with Miss Hammond's rendering of the three selections of Wieniawski's. You were, I fancy, predisposed to severe criticism."

"Well, you certainly did your best; your voice improves like wine with time."

"I wondered if you were going to say age. I am not yet old enough to resent it, and I am so tired of having the papers speak of 'the youthful artists.' As Virginia says, I feel as if I were still in the kindergarten."

Mr. Van Anden smiled tolerantly.

"I, for one, can't find fault with our press notices," he declared. "They are far beyond my most sanguine hopes. Our venture has proved an immense success."

Marcelle glanced at him in surprise. He was usually so extremely reticent and chary of praise that both she and Virginia sometimes secretly resented his attitude.

At eleven they left for Dublin. Virginia admired the beautiful city, and wished intensely for more time to see it and the country properly. She felt that she was being whirled

through Great Britain like a human automobile, catching tantalizing glimpses here and there of fascinating objects, only to leave them half seen or unseen, then on to the next place. "Never mind, I shall come back some day for a leisurely beautiful trip when business is left behind," she thought.

After Cork they returned to Dublin, and sailed early in the morning for Liverpool. Virginia sat on deck in her steamer chair devoting herself to her mail. After reading Ma's letter, inclosing the children's, Virginia tore open one from her oldest girl friend, Grace McPherson, whose home was near hers in the country. She had had many surprises in her life, but this held perhaps the greatest one. It ran as follows:

"My dear Jinny:

"I've been very remiss lately in writing. My heart and hands have been full. I have seen a great deal of your friend, Theodore Jordan. You remember that we met at your

father's home nearly two years ago. He came up here last summer, when on a visit to Carlisle to his home people. I fancy he came chiefly to talk with me of you. One afternoon it all came out, his hopeless love for you and his gradual conviction that you were right when you insisted that you cared more for your fiddle than for any man. I felt very sorry for him, Jinny; I think so much of you myself that I perhaps realized more than any one what he had lost. I also felt the hopelessness of it. He stayed a week longer than he intended. He asked me to write to him and we have corresponded regularly. At the Christmas holidays he came again.

“Then, as you know, Elizabeth came for a few days' visit to see your stepmother. How the latter loves you, Virginia! I never saw such pride and affection as shine in her kind eyes when she talks of you!

“Well, Elizabeth and I saw a great deal of each other in the short visit. One day she said suddenly: ‘I don't know whether Thee or

Alan is to marry Genevieve Black. A while ago I was sure it was Alan; lately I've thought from something in one of his letters that it was Thee. I tease Virginia and tell her she is half jealous of Miss Black, for both her chums are so taken with her and admire her so much. In Paris Virginia and I were rather wobbly about which one she would marry. Then when Alan didn't come over at the last minute we were sure that as he preferred going to the Blacks' ranch, he was the prospective bridegroom. Thee didn't talk about her so much at Christmas, and that is a bad sign. Mother and I always hoped he would marry Virginia, but while they were the best of friends there was never the least bit of sentiment between them. I should think all the men would be crazy over Virginia. I never knew a girl who had so much. The gods love her, but I hope she won't die young. And I never knew a girl who cared so little for men in that way. Her violin seems sufficient to fill all needs.'

"Then we talked of your success and pre-

dicted great things of your future. I don't wonder you like Elizabeth, Jinny: she is a fine girl. She insisted on my going back with her on a visit. I had the time of my life. And while I was there came the astounding letter from Theodore. He had come to love me, and begged me to try and care for him a little. It was a beautiful letter, Jinny. I don't see how he ever came to love me after such a girl as you. I should be jealous of some girls, but I can't be of you. I've loved you ever since I can remember. You've stood to me for all that is fine and high and straight. I've tried to live up to you. But I had come to think that Genevieve Black had consoled him for you. And here it was I. I cannot yet believe it. He has just left here. We are to be married in May. I do hope you will be home by then. We're to take a short trip and then on to that beautiful ranch which I am to share with him. I don't believe I could be happy in the city. I love the very breath of the country, and a big ranch is my ideal of a home. Wish us happi-

ness, Jinny. The Jordans have been so dear, and my people are so happy over it, and your stepmother is knitting me lace and making the daintiest lingerie for my trousseau. She is the best woman. You can't realize how Janet is developing lately; and Bob is a fine fellow and so handsome. Lucinda Dildine is to bake my cakes for the wedding, so they will be all right. Elizabeth and I are sure now that Alan is Genevieve's lover. He has just returned from there. He said to Elizabeth, just before he left, that a Miss Ainslee, who had spent several months in London, reported that gossip declared that the new American violinist, Miss Hammond, was to be the future Lady Farringdon; but Elizabeth and I are sure that if that were true you would have told us before now.

"Jinny dear, I want more than ever to see you face to face. The only thing that ever made me doubt your taste and judgment was your refusal of Theodore. I can't see how you could do it! I know that you will wish us both

all happiness and good, and I can wish for you no greater thing than just such a love as ours.

“With deep affection, as ever,

“GRACE.”

“Marcelle,” Virginia cried, as the latter placed her chair nearer hers; “I never was, as Lucinda Dildine would say, so flabbergasted in my life! You met my friend, Grace McPherson, when you visited me, and here she, and not Genevieve Black, is to marry Theodore. How strange life is! And what capers fortune kicks up just when we think she is a staid female. Well, I believe after all, they are suited admirably, when I once get used to the idea; but how funny that neither Elizabeth nor I ever dreamed of such a thing!”

“I thought it was you,” Marcelle said. “You know I was at the Blacks’ ranch when you and Mr. Jordan were together for a while, and if ever I saw a man in love with a girl that same man was your Mr. Theodore. I might

have fallen in love with him myself if he had more than glanced at me."

"Grace is far better suited to him than I could ever be. She is so steady and well-balanced, capable and level-headed. I always said she wore so well. Thee will adore her."

Marcelle looked at her friend with what Virginia called her three-cornered smile.

"You certainly are a queer girl, Miss Hammond. Here I have wanted all my life to be beautiful; I almost worship beauty; and you have it and do not seem to care for it. I declare, I do not think fate gives a square deal."

"Marcelle," Virginia said earnestly, "I do not see why you and others call me a beauty. I looked at myself last night in the mirror quite critically, and what I saw is just a pleasant, attractive face; and you and many others have that. Lady Farrington said that you had."

Marcelle smiled again.

"There are none so blind as those who won't see," she quoted. "I wonder," she added, with a quick, mischievous glance at her friend,

“how Captain Bertie succeeded as his brother’s emissary? Did you ever hear of an American named John Alden?”

And Virginia, much to her own vexation, felt the traitorous tell-tale color mount to her forehead as she hastily changed the subject.

CHAPTER XI

NOVEL EXPERIENCES IN LONDON

THE next few weeks were a whirl. After the Liverpool performance Mr. Van Anden spirited them away to Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Coventry, Northampton and Cambridge in quick succession. He understood the importance of clever advertising. Everywhere they met with enthusiastic audiences, but the girls grew very tired by the time they reached London. Miss Van Anden was at times hardly endurable. Virginia wondered sometimes if she could be quite sane. She seemed especially vindictive towards herself. Virginia had had two letters from Captain Bertie. They were much better than he had led her to expect,—natural, easy, like himself. Aunt Henrietta had sent them the address of excellent lodgings on Half Moon Street, off Piccadilly, of a French widow of

recently reduced fortunes, who had consented to let them have a bedroom and sitting-room at moderate prices. After a rest of two days they gave a recital at Steinway Hall. To the girls' surprise, the Londoners did not seem to have forgotten their previous entertainment, and the hall was full.

They found a letter from Lady Farrington, cordial, apologetic, full of regrets over their inability to entertain them as they had hoped, but Lord Farrington had decided that he needed a trip on the Continent, so they had closed the house and departed. "You showed so much interest, my dear Miss Hammond, in my brother when here," she added, "that perhaps you will be interested to know that he is at comfortable lodgings at Rye with his new valet, who is devoted to him. Bertie made me promise that if we left town we would do this. He found the valet through friends."

The Van Andens were to go directly to New York. They settled affairs satisfactorily to all concerned before they separated.

“I must say, young ladies,” Mr. Van Anden announced, in his formal manner, “that when I undertook our present enterprise it was with various misgivings as to its ultimate success; but it has proved most satisfactory financially and artistically. I should be most happy to repeat it in the future, either abroad or in our own country.”

“He ignores the important obstacle to any future contracts, his sister,” Marcelle said to Virginia, as the two started for their lodgings. “But, I must say, I have found our manager most satisfactory,” Marcelle went on; “honorable, fairly considerate and a gentleman. What a pity that he must be saddled with an incubus like Drusilla! Most men wouldn’t stand for it. He is either the most forbearing of saints or the most craven of men. Virginia, do you realize that we are free creatures with leisure to join the militants, to dawdle or to sight-see from morn till dewy eve? I feel intoxicated with the very thought of it after such a strenuous six months.”

"Strenuous! I should say so!" Virginia agreed. "For the first time in my checkered existence I didn't know Christmas till I ran up against it the night before!"

The next morning Marcelle went out to do some necessary shopping, leaving the Violin Lady to write letters. Virginia could hardly believe her eyes when the maid brought up Mr. Van Anden's card. With forebodings of she knew not what, she received him.

Although she had seen him constantly for months, Virginia never felt that she knew the real Mr. Van Anden. His extreme reserve seemed to envelop him as with a garment. He was remarkably ill at ease.

"I am sure, my dear Miss Hammond, that you thought you were done with the Van Andens," he said, smiling a little, "but I wished to call in regard to certain matters before I left town."

"Miss Le Duc is out," Virginia informed him, as he paused.

"Yes, I have been with her for an hour or

more," he said. "The interview," he hesitated, "was not what I hoped, but it was what I feared. Miss Hammond, I asked your friend to be my wife. I would not do so earlier, because her refusal would have made our relations embarrassing and unpleasant during our business arrangement. I was hardly surprised that her answer was what it turned out to be; but I feel that I cannot be reconciled to all that it implies. My relations with her have shown her to me under so many and varied circumstances that I feel that I know her well. The knowledge has only deepened my regard. I care for her so deeply," his carefully modulated voice trembled in spite of him, "that I have ventured to ask if you will plead with her for me, urging her to at least postpone her ultimatum for a while and allow me to try to win her. I feel that it is asking a great deal to expect a gifted girl like Miss Le Duc to share my modest fortunes, but I would do my best to make her happy."

"I am sure that you would," Virginia has-

tened to say; "but Marcelle is a woman who has a decided mind of her own. More than this, she seems wonderfully indifferent to the attentions of men, and, so far, averse to all ideas of matrimony. But I shall do my best, Mr. Van Anden. I shall ask her at least to reconsider her answer, and, if she refuses, to allow you to write to her and be on terms of intimate friendship with her."

"Thank you, Miss Hammond; you are most kind." He paused, and Virginia, impatient to finish her letters, wondered at his delayed departure.

"I have put my own affairs first for fear Miss Le Duc would return before I could finish," he hurried on, "but I want to speak of another matter. It pertains to my sister. In one of her spasms of temper this morning she informed me of some of the unfortunate — often, I fear, insulting — things she has said to you and Miss Le Duc. Several things she repeated to you were false, one that I had said you were not a genius. I had declared you

were and it made her very angry. I hesitated to allow her to join our little company, but she begged and implored so earnestly, and promised over and over again that she would do better, that I yielded. My sister was left to my care by my mother when I was a boy; I have tried to make good, but she has been a problem. She is really to be pitied, for her life is what she makes it. I am more distressed than I can say that you should have had to bear what you must have borne all these months, but it is a matter in which I am powerless. I will bid you good morning."

"Not yet, please," Virginia hastened to say. "Let me tell you first that while it has been hard neither Marcelle nor I have ever blamed you, Mr. Van Anden; and I want to thank you again for your kindness and upright dealing with me."

"Your future is already assured, Miss Hammond. I wish you all kinds of good things."

"The same to you," returned Virginia, as he bowed himself out.

She went back to her letters but the zest was gone. She had caught a glimpse of the man back of his formal, correct speech, and her compassion was roused.

“Poor man!” Virginia thought. “He can never win Marcelle, and his sister will neither die nor marry. What a fate!”

She wrote on, finished one letter, began another. Then again the maid interrupted her: “A lady to see you; she hasn’t a card.”

Virginia glanced up inquiringly as a woman, heavily veiled, entered the little room. She threw back the thick veil and faced her. It was Drusilla, her eyes swollen and red, her unattractive face distorted and repellent.

“I’ve had a dreadful scene with my brother,” she began. “He is the only being on earth I care for, and I’ve ruined his success now as I have before. Neither you nor Miss Le Duc will ever want to go with him again, and he has never done so well as with you.”

“We would be glad to go with your brother at some future time, Miss Van Anden, but not

with you," Virginia replied frankly. "We could not in reason subject ourselves to another wearing experience such as we have endured at your hands. You could not expect it."

"I don't. I am cursed with a temper and disposition that can come only from the Evil One. I cannot remember the time when I wasn't discontented and unhappy. Why was I born so and you entirely different? Why was I, who longed to be attractive, made so utterly unattractive and ugly? Why must I, who have worked hard for years at my music, fail to make good because I lack some inherent gift I cannot gain, while you and Miss Le Duc have it? I have hated you ever since that first public performance at Cardiff; hated you so that I felt at times I could kill you, you, who have, through no deserving of your own, snatched all of Fortune's gifts that I covet. You ought to be kind and affable and good; why shouldn't you be? You have love, admiration and praise lavished on you. Miss Le Duc is gifted and graceful, but she hasn't beauty;

and then she has had a much harder life than yours, so I don't hate her so much. I promised my brother most solemnly that I would apologize to you for all that I've done, and the lies I've told you, so I say right here that I do beg your pardon, but I was bound that first I would tell you just how I felt."

Virginia, who had listened to this outpouring in silence, now opened her mouth to speak, when Drusilla fairly ran from the room, down the stairs and out into the street. A moment later Marcelle came in.

"I met a woman going out as I came in, all muffled up in a dark blue veil and seeming in a mad haste. I thought we were the only lodgers."

"It was Drusilla," Virginia explained. She told her of Miss Drusilla's harangue. "And really, Marcelle," she ended, "I could not but feel there was some truth in what she said. Why, indeed, should I have more than she? It isn't because I deserve it. I was born so, and Drusilla was born her way. Of course

we are bound to make good, but think of how much she has to struggle against and I . . . we . . . have so much less."

"Speak for yourself," Marcelle declared. "I never shall admit I don't struggle, and fall, too; but don't ask me to sympathize with Drusilla. Her last attack is too fresh in my mind."

"I thought I was to have a very quiet, uneventful morning here all alone, and get several letters written," Virginia went on, "but I have had new experiences fairly hurled in my face."

"Well, I have had some unexpected happenings myself," Marcelle observed quietly as she put away her wraps.

"Such as a proposal of marriage," Virginia offered tentatively.

Marcelle turned on her astonished eyes.

"How did you know that, Virginia Hammond? Drusilla couldn't have told you, for she doesn't know it. I shudder to think what she wouldn't do if she did!"

"Mr. Van Anden came here to beg my good offices in his behalf with a hard-hearted wretch

I know well," Virginia explained. "I must say I never liked him so well. If you can't accept him, Marcelle, why not keep him as a friend and allow him to write to you? You may come to care for him; and, anyhow, it would be a comfort to him. I confess I feel sorry for the man."

"I know that I shall never care for him," Marcelle declared with such unusual warmth that her friend looked at her in surprise. "And, knowing that, I should do wrong to him and to myself to keep leading him on with false hopes to a worse disappointment. I think too highly of him, and I would not approve of myself if I did."

"But if he wishes it, and understands that you are not doing it to encourage him, I hardly see how it would be wrong to him," persisted Virginia.

"Well, we look at it differently; I gave him my answer this morning, and it is final. I am very sorry to give him pain, but I don't see why he ever fell in love with a girl like me. I

would have as soon thought of the dome of St. Paul's flirting as that Burlington Van Anden would be guilty of such weakness. I respect him and don't dislike him, but imagine loving or marrying a man you would call Burly for short, and having for an intimate daily companion one whose most ordinary speech needs the momentary use of a dictionary. No, Mr. Van Anden must console himself with another type of woman from Marcelle Le Duc."

"I told him that you had decided opinions of your own," Virginia explained demurely.

"In other words," said Marcelle, with a gleam in her dark eyes, "I am individual. Did you never hear that 'wherein we differ from others we are individual, but wherein others differ from us they are eccentric'? Well, I can't say that I care much for men in the bulk. I don't as a rule like to talk to them. They are not interesting to me; they either pay me ridiculous compliments, or, if they talk sense, they lay down the law and ignore my opinions, or they are flatly stupid. Now, you like them



“ I LIKE WOMEN MUCH BETTER. MEN BORE ME ”

up to a certain point, and they like, but generally love, you. I like women much better. Men bore me."

"And you show it, too." Virginia gave an irrepressible giggle. "If you could just see yourself, Marcelle! There you stood at the reception held for us in Liverpool, for instance, tall and prettier than I ever saw you in your stunning pink silk gown; I watched you as the male specimens came crowding about you. Your eyes, usually bright and of a pleasant turn, acquired a stony stare, you stiffened until I wondered if your back would ever unbend. I saw your victims' smiles fade away, terror crept into their eyes, they pumped your hand like machines and wondered how soon they could escape."

"I know that you exaggerate, of course, Virginia," Marcelle interrupted, "but I wonder if I do show my feelings at all that way. I mean to watch myself and see."

The next day the girls set out sight-seeing, but they were fated not to have their coveted

leisure. Offers to give entertainments at private houses poured in on them. They found themselves, to their amazement, very much in demand in fashionable London. Weeks passed and they hardly had an afternoon or evening free. The sums offered them seemed exorbitant, but, as Marcelle urged, it wasn't their proposition. If people wanted to pay fancy prices for a fad, she and Virginia were not the ones to demur, she argued. Then came a letter from Camondreau urging them to be in Paris before the middle of June to offer their services in a concert to be given by several artists, the proceeds to be used for a new children's hospital.

They were really about at the end of their resources. They had been under quite a strain for many months. There was beginning to be a lull in the demands of their patrons. They had had social attentions, they had made some charming acquaintances, altogether it was a unique experience, and, as Marcelle said, a paying investment as well. It was enough to turn

the heads of older and more experienced women, but the girls kept theirs on their shoulders.

“ If this gave us the big head I’d be ashamed to look Ma in the face,” Virginia declared. “ It’s only a passing phase, in two or three years we shall be forgotten, and somebody will say: ‘ Oh, do you remember those two American girls; what were their names? ’ ”

She managed to snatch time for her letters. Alan had not written for some time when a letter came from him. Virginia found herself opening it with a quaking heart. It was, she felt sure, the announcement of his engagement, and that meant the end of their long and enjoyable friendship and correspondence. But he did not mention Genevieve. He wrote of all his doings, of the young people, of his enjoyment of Doris Keane in “ Romance,” of a charming young girl harpist, a new friend of Elizabeth’s, of Mrs. Jordan’s restored health, of his good times with Elizabeth, in spite of her round of gayety, of two novels he had read,

not new only to him, and enjoyed, "The Lead of Honour" and "The Hills of Hampshire."

"I sometimes wonder, Jinny," he ended, "if your violin will always fully satisfy you. I've been subscribing for the *London Times*, and I keep tab on your public doings. You certainly are making good with a vengeance, as I always said you would. I wonder if all that adulation and *furore* lately appeals to you, or if you in time will tire of it. If you are the old Jinny you would prefer, I think, the honest criticism and appreciation of musicians and people who count, to the froth of ultra-fashionable cults. I believe you felt more real happiness when you went to that far-off Western ranch to play to a lonely sick woman than you feel now after one of your drawing-room coteries. Am I right?"

"How well Alan always understands! I am tiring of it all. I would give anything to hear Camondreau criticise me in his quick, sharp tone as he paced the floor. Too many sweets cloy; when one breathes too much per-

fumed air one needs a good whiff of mountain oxygen."

Virginia put down Alan's letter written in his decidedly masculine, characteristic hand, and opened Captain Bertie's foreign one. He told of scenes in the Mediterranean, of his going to a shore dance at Gibraltar and meeting some pretty English and Italian girls. He ended with:

"But oh, how soon I would give it all up for one glimpse of you, Virginia! Are you still of the same mind? Don't you feel sometimes that you would be glad to see me? I fear not. The little wooden instrument is still my deadly rival. Well, that's better than one of flesh and blood. When that comes I shall give up, but until then I shall hope on, hope ever.

"Yours, as always,

"ALBERT."

Virginia felt the contrast in the letters. There was something in Alan's that gave forth

strength, character, an intangible but real sense of an earnest, vital force: Bertie's was pleasant, even entertaining, but it lacked something.

She called herself a carping critic. She told herself that the Englishman would make her reasonably content and prove a charming companion. Why not end this uncertainty? Why not make the Captain blissfully happy by sending him a message of surrender? Why not? Because, in her heart of hearts, she demanded more than he could give; because there was, when she thought of marriage, a vision of a union ideal perhaps, but with conditions which, to her, seemed vital, and which lesser ones failed to satisfy. Where was the man to meet them? Somewhere, she felt sure; if not, she would go alone through life. There was always her violin.

CHAPTER XII

A CHAPTER OF SURPRISES

ONE Sunday morning Virginia and Marcelle determined to go to the Foundling Hospital. Their time was short, and they had not seen half they longed to, although they had seized every possible chance that would not interfere with their engagements. Virginia was especially eager to see and hear the children sing at the morning service in the chapel, and they both wished to see the fine paintings there by West, Hogarth, Gainsborough and others.

Even Marcelle, who had not expected much, was delighted and surprised over the singing; and Virginia saw a child who reminded her of Janet, and another with such a beautiful face she longed to run off with her. The sermon was so especially simple, direct and original

that they were glad to meet the young curate who gave it after the service. They were standing by the organ given by Handel and where he often played his Messiah, when he joined them. Virginia liked his plain but expressive face and manner.

“I felt that I must see you both to thank you for the immense joy you gave my wife and me at Steinway Hall several weeks ago. It was such a treat we think and talk of it often. My wife was sure she had met you once before, Miss Hammond. Do you remember visiting the Haunted House in the woods near your home and being present at a wedding and meeting the bride’s sister, Betty Armitage?”

“I should think I did! You don’t mean that Betty is your wife ’way over here in England?”

He smiled as he declared that it was true, and that, furthermore, he could bring her to prove it, as she was visiting a sick child in the building. Marcelle, who had heard of the wedding three years before at the Haunted House, was almost as interested as she in meeting

Betty, who had been such a charming hostess on that occasion. They watched the children at dinner in their quaint costumes — Virginia always had a guilty feeling on such rare occurrences of putting herself in the children's place, but Marcelle declared they liked the importance and publicity of it.

“ This is the woman the ghost of the Haunted House wafted here,” David Rogers announced, and, turning, Virginia found her hands clasped by the girl she remembered so well, though she had met her but once at the Haunted House at home. They both said almost simultaneously: “ Oh, it is so good to see some one from home ! ”

Mr. Rogers talked to Marcelle as they all walked down the corridor, leaving the others to themselves.

“ You don't know how I felt when I saw you at Steinway Hall,” said Betty Rogers in the eager, bright way Virginia recalled. “ Your face baffled me at first, and then, in spite of your evening gown and different surroundings, I felt sure it was you.”

"How little we thought when we parted where and how we would meet again," Virginia exclaimed. "How is your sister Ruth?"

"She is especially happy now with the dearest baby six months old. I hug his pictures, but it's not very satisfying. We hope to go over next summer."

"I am simply devoured with curiosity as to how and where you met your husband," Virginia asked.

Betty dimpled and smiled. "It wasn't at all romantic! I was visiting Ruth, barely two years ago, and she gave a little evening affair for me. Ellen McCullough asked if she might bring her cousin just arrived from England. He came, saw, and conquered; we were married in haste before his return, but so far haven't repented, perhaps because we have no leisure to spend at the task."

"I needn't ask if you like your new home, because your face tells the tale."

"I am certainly a happy woman, Miss Hammond," Betty said earnestly, "but"—a

shadow fell over the smiling eyes — “my people can’t believe it. They insist on picturing me delving and toiling, poor, and without any of the social diversions I enjoyed so keenly at home. They won’t — or can’t — see what it means to me to help my husband in his work. He says — just think of it! — that I’m the biggest help, and can reach people — women and children — that he can’t. I love it, and I’m so proud of him. Outsiders see in him only a poor, hard-working curate, but I know him for infinitely more.”

“His sermon was far above the ordinary,” Virginia agreed.

“Yes, he preaches well, but it’s his work that tells; just among poor, hard-working, often sinning people, but how he has helped them! There are so many ways, Miss Hammond, if one’s heart is in it. Of course we often long for more money to use, not in alms, but in so many ways — but David says it will come if it’s right and we’re patient.”

They stopped now and then to see the pic-

tures, but for once they paled in interest beside the one Virginia saw from her companion's unconscious portrayal.

"I don't want you to think that we have no play," Betty said before parting. "We run off now and then to simple things,— a lunch in some park, hear some good music, or go off on big occasions for an outing to some of the suburbs — there is always so much right to our hand; and Mr. Rogers' bachelor uncle, who educated him, is so good to us. He furnished our home — can't you and your friend lunch or dine with us some day? — and he is to give us our trip home next summer."

They parted at the next entrance — the Rogers' staying there to dinner and promising to call soon — and walked up Guildford Street hoping to catch a cab on the way.

"Didn't you think Hogarth's 'The Finding of Moses' remarkable?" began Marcelle, but Virginia seemed not to hear.

"Oh, Marcelle," she burst forth, "if we only had more time we might give a recital and

make some money for Mr. Rogers' work. I just can't give it up. I have been grubbing for money for myself or being fêted for so long I am sick to do something for somebody!"

"We might make a little, but a big thing takes time," Marcelle began dubiously, when a big machine slowed down beside them and a voice spoke Virginia's name.

"May I not take you ladies somewhere?"

The girls turned to see Mr. Gerald Fairfax, M.P., whom they had met several times.

"It will be a gift from heaven," Virginia assured him, as he sprang out and opened the door for them.

"I didn't dream of meeting you here," said the gentleman.

"We've been to the Foundling Hospital, and had such a wonderful morning," Virginia explained.

Mr. Fairfax looked at the girl's eager face with interest.

"Do tell me," he found himself saying like a boy, much to his own surprise.

Virginia gave an animated account of everything.

"She talks to him as easily as she would to Theodore Jordan," Marcelle thought, with amusement mingled with astonishment. "It is because she never stops to think of herself. I wish I could forget my horrid self-consciousness with strangers, especially men."

She could hardly believe her ears when she heard the dignified personage saying: "Now, Miss Hammond, just leave it all to me. I shall see that you have a good audience for your recital — shall we say a week from to-morrow night?"

"But, Mr. Fairfax, I never dreamed of you helping me; you are so busy!"

"Not too busy to help you out; and, besides, I have two nephews with me from Oxford. They have heard you both, and would consider themselves honored to help me work it up. Don't you give it a thought except to send me your program."

"Oh, if you will! How fortunate for us

— not you — that we met you! And oh, Mr. Fairfax, would it help any to say that I shall play my new creation, ‘The Conqueror’? I’ve just finished it.”

“They say that Time waits for no man, Miss Hammond, but it must for you,” Mr. Fairfax exclaimed, as he looked at her in admiration and wonder.

“But I’m a woman, so Time is more gallant,” cried the girl laughingly.

They were at home, and as the machine sped away Virginia turned to Marcelle with shining eyes.

“Isn’t it lovely how things work out? I can’t believe that we are to help that dear Mr. Rogers and Betty! Oh, we haven’t had anything to eat, have we? We will go to the ‘Albany’ to-day, and to-morrow let us try ‘Dolly’s’ for chops; somebody said they were fine.”

The next week was an extremely busy one. The girls visited Dickens’ London two mornings, and with other sight-seeing, their

engagements, and letters, they had little leisure.

“What a boon that we needn’t bother about the big recital; it’s like waving your wand, presto, it’s here! The Honorable Mr. Fairfax is, as Lucinda says, ‘getting religion.’ I never was so surprised. He is the last man I should think would be so deeply interested in mission work, but it shows that one can’t most always tell.”

Marcelle looked at her friend curiously. If she did not know her so well she would sometimes have thought her acting a part, or at least posing as an *ingénue*.

The night came for the recital. Marcelle did not share Virginia’s optimism. She felt that as they had played so often, although to small and select audiences, it is true, it would be difficult if not impossible to attract a goodly number. But she was mistaken. Albert Hall was full. The Honorable Mr. Fairfax had nobly fulfilled his contract; his aides had racked their youthful brains for unusual advertise-

ments, and the fame and name of the performers had done the rest. The girls had selected a repertoire entirely new to London. Virginia's composition was received with wild enthusiasm and encores. The papers next day praised it in terms of unusual discrimination.

Best of all, Mr. Rogers received eighty pounds for his work.

They celebrated by a modest, but exceedingly well-cooked luncheon next day at the Rogers'. The latter had called but the girls were out. They managed to squeeze in a lunch with them, but a dinner was not possible. It was a really charming affair. Betty had a well-trained little maid, her house small and not modern was cozy and tastefully furnished. But, as Virginia said, what did surroundings matter anyhow with such natural, happy people as the Rogers'? They laughed over things, they talked of home, they discussed music and children, social settlement work, and books; they felt as if they were old friends.

"Well," Marcelle declared, as they were en

route for home to dress for a recital at Lady Fenchurch's, "I never had a better time and I never talked so much. They're unusual people, Virginia, and oh, what a happy face Mrs. Rogers has! It does me good to know people like that!"

The Honorable Mr. Fairfax called several times. Virginia asked Aunt Henrietta's friend, Madame Crozier, who let them rooms, to loan her her own sitting-room and hover in the background for chaperon.

The last night Marcelle came down suddenly to the back room and asked Madame's help about fixing over a dress, and advice as to their route. Virginia did not notice her absence, but Mr. Fairfax did.

He was usually a man of resource and of no slight influence in politics, but to-night he showed so much absence of mind and a wandering attention that finally made Virginia nervous.

Suddenly he stopped abruptly in what he was saying and burst forth impulsively: "Miss

Hammond, you must think me very tiresome, but I have something on my mind that gives me no peace until it is decided. As you must know, I love you so intensely that before you leave town you must give me my answer. I cannot attend to my duties; I am so unlike myself that others notice it; you have bewitched me. Virginia, won't you marry me?"

The girl looked at him with such genuine surprise that he could not mistake it.

"Didn't you know? Have I been too abrupt?" he cried.

"Mr. Fairfax, I thought you were only my good friend. I suppose I am very stupid, but this is a great surprise. You are so wise, so far above a girl like me, that I supposed you found in me and my music only recreation from your graver duties. I thought that I amused and interested you, and I enjoyed and felt proud of a friendship with a man like you. What can you find in me to want me for your wife?"

"I find everything that other women I have

met lack. You are by turns a child frank, natural, spontaneous, and a woman earnest, thoughtful and intelligent. Besides this you are lovely in appearance, and last, but not least, there is your gift. You are a genius, I suppose, but I never remember the fact when I am with you; I only know you are the woman I love. And I see, my dear, from your eyes that you cannot return it, and that your kind heart refuses to hurt me by telling me so. I felt that it was too much, that I am too old —”

“It isn’t that at all,” Virginia cried impulsively. “You don’t seem old. I like you more than I can say, but I am made so strangely I don’t seem able to really love any one as I feel one should to marry.”

The man rose. He took her hands in his.

“Good-by; don’t take it to heart,” he said, as he bent over her. “You are not at all to blame, unless being so dear is a fault. God grant you all happiness.”

Virginia sat motionless after he left. Then she ran up-stairs to her room. Marcelle was

there alone. She looked startled at the expression on her friend's face.

"Marcelle," Virginia said, "let us go far away to a desert where I shall never have a chance again to hurt a good, fine man. I'm a bad, horrid girl!"

She threw herself down on the bed and gave way to an emotion so strong, so rare, that Marcelle was frightened. She felt that words were useless, but she lay beside Virginia and held her hand in silent but real sympathy, until the storm was over.

Then they went to bed, but Virginia could not sleep.

The next day they sailed for Cherbourg. They felt that the voyage would be restful and quieting after their busy months. Several of the friends they had made were at the wharf to see them off. Their stateroom was full of flowers and books. A big cluster of white violets for Virginia was without a name but she knew the handwriting. Nothing more was said on the subject between the girls of the eve-

ning before. Marcelle, with a tact and feeling she was learning from her friend, exerted herself to exploit plans for their future.

They reached Cherbourg before dark and took the train for "the beautiful city," as the Violin Lady called Paris.

"I love London; I adore Paris," she declared.

CHAPTER XIII

A CHRONICLE OF REVELATIONS

THE girls were unable to secure their old rooms at Madame Victoire's, but they found a pleasant suite on the Rue des Petits Champs. One of the first things Virginia did after seeing Aunt Henrietta was to go to Camondreau's studio to obtain his opinion of her new composition. She was aware that he would be perfectly candid in expressing himself whether for or against. She hardly knew how she had composed it with so many distractions and interruptions; but it had insistently demanded expression — it seemed as if it must be born. She felt rather like a little girl again as she found herself at the entrance to the maestro's studio. She had telephoned beforehand, of course. The comical-looking "buttons" ushered her in with low bows and astonishing gestures.

The maestro ran forward and took her hands in his. His fine old face worked with emotion.

"I have followed my gifted pupil, and my heart beat to suffocation with pride in your success. I predicted it from the first. Paula knew it, and it has come! Gyerson, the greatest violinist in Denmark, heard you in London. He says you have something he cannot fathom. He can attain your technique but not this other. He told me he shed tears over your rendering of Handel's 'Sonate A Major,' and Tschaikowsky's 'Melodie and Scherzo,' op. 42, and Klein's 'Intermezzo.' He could not sleep after hearing you. He is so excitable, is Gyerson, but he is a great performer, not perhaps a genius but close to it."

As soon, however, as Virginia took out her violin to play a change came over the master. He settled back in his chair, his face lost its enthusiasm. He was the judge, the critic.

"I must overcome my fear," thought the girl, "or I shan't do myself justice. He must like it."

"I call it 'The Conqueror,'" she said, in a voice she strove to make perfectly calm and ordinary. She began, and, as she went on, as usual forgot everything in the delight of a creator.

The Conqueror first comes as a warrior: countries fall before him. The violin portrays the din of battle, the blare of trumpets, the success of the man of action. Then comes defeat. The instrument pictures the dead and wounded, and then the requiem, solemn, impressive. Again the Conqueror comes, this time as a man of fame and genius. The air is less martial than the first, quieter yet swelling, triumphant. Then a new air comes in, less victorious; gradually it becomes lower and lower until it dies out. Fame perishes.

Third comes Love the Conqueror, and here Virginia had created a most exquisite air. It wooed, it soothed, it won. All obstacles go down before it. The last enemy is death, but Love triumphs even over that, for Love is eternal.

Camondreau sat as if in a dream listening. When it was over he said simply: "That is a masterpiece; that will live."

By the third of June the artists from out of town arrived. There was Von Himmel, the German baritone, Madame Elson, the Swedish contralto, Marini, the Italian tenor, Fräulein Schurman, the German soprano, besides Étienne, pianist, Virginia and Camondreau violinists, and Marcelle.

The Théâtre du Châtelet was given up to the concerts, one afternoon and evening. Although concerts are usually held during Lent in Paris, the cause and the fame of the soloists created a perfect furore for tickets, which were sold at exorbitant prices.

Virginia and Marcelle had had lace dresses made in London for the occasion: Marcelle's was of an exquisite new yellow shade and Virginia's of white, covered with lace of a pale pink like the inside of a sea-shell. They both appeared in the afternoon and evening. It was at the afternoon session that Virginia



“‘THAT IS A MASTERPIECE; THAT WILL LIVE’”

played "The Conqueror." She was not prepared for its reception. There was that breathless pause always a subtle compliment to the musician, then a storm of applause and cries of "Encore, encore, bravo!" over and over. Virginia, very pale, played part of it again.

Then Marcelle sang. She, who was usually pale, was now flushed. Virginia listened amazed. There was a new tone to her hitherto perfect but often rather cold rendition. It was the one thing hitherto lacking. The German soprano paled beside this new vitalized voice. She sang Verdi's aria from *La Traviata*, "Ah fors e lui," and, as an encore, a quaint old Danish folk-song, "Marstig's Daughter."

There was a little informal reception after the affair. Many came up to congratulate the artists, and to be introduced. There were Doctor de Thèvenau and his wife, eager and proud; Aunt Henrietta, dressed in the height of fashion, animated, vivacious, and, for the first time, seeming to realize that her niece was a great artist.

As Virginia looked over the many strange faces she saw one which made her literally catch her breath: it was a man's face, and the most beautiful one she had ever seen. The blond hair was short but wavy where it had a chance, the head perfectly shaped, well set, the eyes unlike any in the world. They held you as if unconsciously, with a wonderful expression, half tender, half appealing. She hardly knew the color; if they were blue they were the darkest she had ever seen. The face might have been effeminate perhaps if it were not for the mouth and chin which were strong with a hint of sternness. He seemed to be coming directly towards her with a smile which suddenly irradiated his whole face. He held out his hands, and Marcelle, a little behind her, gave him hers.

"I saw you while I sang; I never dreamed you would come."

"I wasn't certain till the last," he answered, "but I ran off. I couldn't miss such a thing as this."

Then Marcelle seemed to remember where she was. "This is my friend of whom you have heard so much; Miss Hammond, Doctor Hensen." Then some one claimed Virginia's attention. It was all a jumble afterwards. Before the evening performance the girls rested and had a light supper; then Virginia thought of nothing but that she must play after Camondreau. She had not felt any fear in London; she had grown perfectly self-contained, or rather free from any self-consciousness. She supposed she was cured, but to-night she felt as if she never could play De Beriot's "Concerto."

Marcelle sang as she had in the afternoon. She had selected an aria from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, "Urs Bel Di." As she listened, Virginia forgot herself for the time, then as she came forward, amid thunderous applause, she felt as if she could not go on. She took up her bow and tuned the violin with hands that trembled. Étienne struck the first chord of the accompaniment with his masterly touch

and at once Virginia seemed to feel lifted out of herself and free as air. And then a strange thing happened. As she stood there, erect, graceful, absorbed, before that vast listening throng, she forgot Camondreau, forgot herself, every one, for suddenly there before her as if in the flesh she saw two men: one, a tall giant of a fellow with a plain, strong, clean face, and eyes that held hers as if they would never let them go; and another, blond, slender, handsome, smiling. She watched them fascinated and played on and on. And, as she played, the words sang in her heart to an accompaniment of the air she played: "Why, it's Alan I love; he is the man that I've waited for all these years. How blind I've been! Poor Captain Bertie! Alan, Alan, I love you. I love you, I . . . love . . . you!"

The figures vanished, and she was aware that she was standing there playing with all her soul and heart and mind. She ended amid a silence so perfect that it was almost painful; then it seemed as if the applause would never

end. Virginia felt that she could not play again, but they would not let her off. She decided suddenly to give the last of "The Conqueror" alone. The King of Love had come to her. She would celebrate it. She felt a strange exaltation; her spirit seemed to reach across the ocean. What was space before such love as hers?

Somehow the evening passed. Virginia knew that she met people, that Camondreau told her in his proud, triumphant voice: "I shall not be here long, but I shall leave a pupil behind greater than Paula. I have not lived for nothing"; but nothing seemed real.

Doctor de Thèvenau took them home in his car. Marcelle's friend was staying with him and was in the car with them. Virginia was suddenly aware of how terribly tired she was.

Before she threw herself on the bed she said: "Marcelle, you've found the only thing your voice lacked; it is soul."

"I thought you couldn't play better, but tonight — oh, Virginia, but I was proud of you,

dear. You should have heard how people raved over you!"

Then Virginia slept soundly.

When she wakened next day she looked at the little clock in amazement. It was nearly noon, and Marcelle's bed was empty and made up. She was gone.

Virginia dressed and waited for Marcelle's return before going out to lunch. The door swung back and Marcelle came in dressed for the street. But the face was not Marcelle's. It was transformed with a light such as had so changed Doctor de Thèvenau's. Virginia stared.

"What is the matter?" Marcelle asked, arrested by the look.

"You . . . you have found it, too!"

"What, Virginia?"

"Love."

"How did you know? Oh, my dear, let us have lunch somewhere near. Then, when we come back, I shall tell you all."

During lunch Marcelle's face still held the

look. She ate absently and left much of her food untasted.

After they came back home Virginia said gently: "I'm so glad, Marcelle. He is wonderful. How long have you been engaged, and why didn't you tell me?"

"I am not betrothed, and never shall be, Virginia. That is why I didn't tell you before. But nothing can take this wonderful thing from us both, Conrad says, as long as life lasts."

"But I don't understand," Virginia murmured in a puzzled tone.

She looked at Marcelle. The girl's eyes met hers with the light suddenly overcast. "Conrad is married," she said; "his wife has been hopelessly insane for years. I couldn't talk about it to any one but you, Virginia. I couldn't before, even to you, but I want to now, and Conrad is willing.

"It was in Berlin that I first met him a few months after I went there. A friend of mine — a French student — was in the hospital very ill. I went to see her and there I met the

young Danish doctor people were talking about, Conrad Hensen. Hortense was very ill many weeks, and I went often to see her. I met the doctor many times. He was very fond of music and played the flute. He asked if he might call. He was overworked and lonely. The second time he came he told me of his wife. 'I am married, yet I have no joys or companionship of the married. I feel that you will let me be your friend. You are alone, so am I,' he said. We never mentioned or hinted at love. We talked of books, and on various other topics. I sang for him. He sometimes accompanied me on his flute. We both grew to look forward to his visits. Often they were but once a week, he was so busy. I was glad and proud to have such a friendship. I felt that it meant much to both of us. We felt that nothing but friendship was possible for us.

"His aunt, who kept house for him, came to see me. She had had few advantages in her youth, but was a kindly, capable woman. Her idol was Conrad. She cried when she talked

of him. 'I've known him since his mother died long ago,' she burst forth; 'his father was a dreamer; he let Conrad drift from one relative to another. Then his mother's brother came to Copenhagen to live, rich and childless. He took a fancy to Conrad, as who wouldn't? He found out the boy's passion for medical science and had him go to Berlin. On his visits home the girls were very fond of him. Gerda Helst was the prettiest girl, and she and her people left nothing undone to make Conrad marry her. I saw it all, but what could I do? The little I said he thought I had listened to idle tongues and misjudged her. She was a dear if rather spoiled child, in his opinion. After the marriage she refused to go to Berlin, where Conrad had a fine opening. So he stayed in Copenhagen. It was not long before the poor boy's eyes were opened. She was a terrible woman, and much older than Conrad. He bore it for three years, and then she went insane, and had to be confined. They never told Conrad that her father and grandfather

died in a mad house. There is no hope, but Conrad says she may possibly be restored; and, anyhow, the law would not free him. I cannot be reconciled to it. You are his friend. I felt I must tell you, for he never would. He has such exalted ideas of loyalty. They say some marriages are made in heaven; what of those made in the other place? Why must my fine boy's life be ruined? Why should he have been mated to a termagant, a vain, uncontrolled, silly woman? God have mercy on us!' So she ran on, and I, as I listened, felt so bitterly sorry for him. I suppose I should never have permitted the friendship. I've always blamed women who were at all intimate with married men; but this seemed different. If Conrad had not been the man he is I'm sure I should have refused to have him call; but being with him I grew more and more to feel perfect trust in and respect for him. In fact, for months I never thought of anything but the pleasure and companionship he brought into my life. Then I came here. We were to correspond.

He never said or wrote a word of love until this morning. He said he must see me before he left. We went to Versailles early, and he told me that after I left he knew he cared for me as he never had cared for any one. I told him that I was sure I loved him in Berlin the first time I was there. We talked hours and then we parted. Conrad doesn't think we ought to write or meet. He feels that he owes it to his wife. He begged me to forgive him for his weakness in coming; but I wouldn't let him go on. I told him that he had given me the greatest happiness of my life, something that, as he said, even death could never take from me. He is gone."

"Marcelle, it isn't right; is there no way out? Can't he get a divorce?"

"No, and I doubt if he would. He seems to feel that he must be all the more loyal to his wife because of her helplessness and because he doesn't love her. He says that his vows bind him for better, for worse. Then he has known of a few cured, some temporary, one perma-

ment, and he can't see his way clear to do anything but this. The more his love for me draws him away from her, the more he resists."

"And you?"

"Well, Virginia, I am not as strong nor as good as Conrad; and women, when they love as I do, give their all. Yet I could not and would not say one word to tempt him. I have too much respect for his conscience. It fairly hurt me physically, I made such an effort to keep back the prayer that rose to my lips to take me. No, we must bear it and live far apart. Yet I would much rather have what I have than never to have known Conrad. There is much in life still for both of us, and we must make good. There will be days when I don't feel this way, I know, but I shall overcome in the end. There are some things worse, Virginia, than renunciation, I find."

The Violin Lady looked at her friend in secret wonder. She had always felt that if the strange experience came Marcelle would take it most seriously. Yet now that it had

come she felt it almost impossible to believe. Marcelle had seemed immune; and now when this beautiful thing had come into the lives of both the girl and her lover, they had to put it away as a forbidden gift. And why? Because of a woman who was most unworthy, who had made life a series of maddening acts, and had finally become a wreck, a creature unable to understand or know, one whom the alienists pronounced incurable. And it had come to Marcelle of all others: Marcelle, whose life had lacked so much, who, Virginia hoped, might have a shower of happiness and domestic joys like other women. Yet there she sat actually rejoicing that this love had come into her heart, which, if she had not mocked, she certainly had not sought. Virginia resented it all. She felt that the times were out of joint, that she could not stand idly by and do nothing to change destiny, for the girl before her.

“Conrad’s a wonderful man,” Marcelle the reticent was saying; “he is not only good but strong. He is so understanding, like a woman.

I don't wonder that the sick children love him. The nurses at the hospital say that his personality does more than his remedies to effect his marvelous cures. He has such an admiration for America. He longs to go there, but he feels that he must not desert his wife. He says our love is not a sin so long as we do not allow it to be one; and that it may prove a benediction, an incentive to higher things. He made me feel so too. He always makes me feel, when I am with him, that I can do anything, or bear anything."

Virginia was silent. She felt that Marcelle wanted a sympathetic listener as she slowly poured out her pent-up feelings, not words, which, after all, must be inadequate.

"Doctor de Thèvenau thinks him far above the ordinary in his profession," the girl went on in her new, eager voice; "he says among medical men he is regarded as a rising man. And, just think, Virginia, I am an incentive and help to a man like that! I can't comprehend it!" At last she rose. "I must go to see

Madame de Thèvenau, I promised her. Something about investing my money more satisfactorily, I believe. You have been so good, Virginia, to listen to me. I could not talk so to any one else, but you won't be bothered again."

Virginia came swiftly towards Marcelle and put her arms about her. She said nothing.

"Don't feel so distressed over me, Jinny, dear. It might be so much worse. Good-by, I shall be back for dinner." And Marcelle was gone.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LITTLE GOD IN AMERICA

VIRGINIA had been so engrossed with Marcelle's unexpected confession that she had not had time to think of herself. The second day her exaltation had fallen from her. Alan belonged to another. He never had cared that way for her, and here she had given him her love unsought and undesired. It was worse in a way than Marcelle's experience: that is, more humiliating.

In their morning's mail the girls found letters from a manager at the Hague wanting them to give a series of three recitals there, open air affairs. His offer was way beyond what they had heretofore received.

"Virginia, we are at last making our fortunes, I do believe!" Marcelle declared. "Of course we will go."

"And Camondreau is anxious for us to give

a concert with a friend of his in the fall. He says this friend wants to arrange with us later for a tour in Denmark and Scandinavia." Virginia did not speak with her usual eager enthusiasm. Marcelle's keen eyes noted the change.

"The Violin Lady is tired; she has drawn too much on her vitality, and, unusual as it is, it is not infallible," she thought. "She needs a change."

"Why, here is a letter from Elizabeth!" Virginia exclaimed. "She hasn't written for some time."

She tore it open and read the long epistle.

"I've been quite remiss, dear Virginia, but perhaps when you read what follows you'll find it in your heart to forgive me.

"First, I must tell you of Thee's wedding the last of May. I selected the picture you asked me to get for them — Hopkinson Smith's lovely water color — and they were delighted with it, as well they might be. The McPherson house looked so pretty with flowers, mostly from the

woods. We brought Thee's old rector, Mr. Oliver, to marry them. Grace looked lovely in her white messaline and veil of exquisite old lace which had been her mother's and grandmother's. It was all simple and informal and just suited Thee. He says folderols and dew-dabs are all right for common, ordinary weddings, but not for weddings. He is so handsome and fine, Virginia — I hope you don't mind this sisterly outburst! — He confided to me that Grace was a tearing beauty, but what he especially liked about her was her good sense and even disposition. He smiled so much that I wondered if his mouth would ever get back to normal. A friend of Grace's, with a very sweet voice, sang 'Oh, Promise Me.' Lucinda was hovering in the background. She made all the cakes, and they were the best ever. She told me plainly that my brother ought to have married you, only she rather preferred Alan, 'though Mr. Jordan is a looker,' she concluded. Poor Lucinda! she is heartsick and homesick for you, Virginia, as indeed we all are! Your

father and mother were there, of course. I don't believe 'Ma' ever will grow old. She wore a new dark blue net and your laces. Bob and Janet helped. Janet is so capable, a real little woman. Father and Mother gave the children — Thee and Grace laugh over that phrase! — a big check, and the McPhersons ditto. Mother and I gave them a stack of table linen — some I embroidered. Your family together gave a case of silver forks; friends brought and sent the usual cut glass and silver. Thee's gift to the bride was the oddest necklace and pendant. But, best of all, he has an excellent housekeeper, a real treasure. Grace may not realize it, but while husbands are a drug on the market, cooks are as rare as Tiffany's best diamonds. They're to take only a short trip — the Jordans not the diamonds — as Thee is needed at the ranch, Grace told me. She also said that the only thing lacking at the big event was her darling Jinny.

"I suppose you think this is enough on the important subject of Cupid's doings,— you who

are to be a celibate always on account of your superior violin! But alas, my dear, your old 'Lizbeth has succumbed also to the fell destroyer — or is that expression used for something very different? 'To cut it in short,' as Lucinda says when she is starting in on a long discourse, my engagement to Professor Canfield is to be announced next week. I met him when I was East with Mother and saw considerable of him; but he declares he fell in love with me long ago when we were on the steamer going to Paris and he watched me striking that ridiculous attitude and quoting Shakespeare. I didn't know how much I cared till I came home. He is to be here to-morrow. To think of 'Lizbeth Jordan marrying a learned professor of English instead of the circus clown you once predicted I would choose, because I must have some one to make me laugh!

“ And before I forget it I must tell you about Raoul the Aristocrat. I laughed when you warned me that he would make trouble for me and that you did not trust him. Then came the

episode connected with Alec Forbes. I supposed that ended it, but I didn't know Raoul. Professor Canfield's cousin, Helen Mallory, spent several months in Paris. She corresponds with Mr. Canfield, and in one of her last letters she wrote: 'You often mention your friend, Miss Elizabeth Jordan. The other day I casually mentioned her to a Frenchman I met at dinner, M. Raoul D'Artois. At once he looked so strangely. "When did you hear from her?" he asked. "I do not know her. She is a friend of my cousin, Professor Canfield, and he writes that she spent a year here; I thought you might have met her."

" " "And is your cousin interested in her?" he asked quickly.

" " "It looks that way," I laughed, as I said it in my halting French.

" " "The reason I ask," he went on so rapidly I could hardly understand him, "is that I am glad to hear she is alive. I suppose your cousin knows that she has tuberculosis. I knew her well when here. She gave for an excuse that

she came to study music under M. Étienne, but it was really to place herself under the care of the noted Doctor de Thèvenau. He pronounced her hopeless. It is a matter of heredity. It is very sad, for she is an attractive girl. I don't blame her for wishing to keep it a secret."

" 'I told him that from all you wrote Miss Jordan seemed very well and strong. But he only shook his head very solemnly as he said, 'She always looked well.'"

" 'He is, by the way,' she added, 'the most diseased egotist I ever met.'"

"Mr. Canfield only repeated this to me after we were engaged, for he said that whether it were true or not I was the only woman for him, but that for a delicate girl I certainly could do more athletic stunts than any one he knew. Of course I told him all about my friend Raoul. It is something I can't comprehend, such petty malicious spite; but I could forgive it more easily if he had been bright enough to have invented a cleverer and different lie for the

second. But poor Raoul doesn't need to be clever; he has blue blood. Pouf! Vanish Monsieur!

"*Revenons à nos moutons* — I must air my French a little — Monsieur Canfield is nearly ten years my senior but looks as young as I do. I don't believe he is handsome, but mother says his face is unusually interesting and alive. He's alive all right, and if he were as homely as a mud fence I'd love him and marry him and go with him to the world's end. Fortunately I don't have to, for he has accepted a position in the University here chiefly that I may be near the dear home folks. We're to be married in September; can't you be my maid of honor? That would complete my happiness already overflowing. Isn't it strange how we know? Here I thought for a very short time it might be Alec Forbes, but I soon found it wasn't. Ah, Virginia, we used to smile at the little god's doings, and feel that we could afford to turn him down, but when our turn comes we fall as completely as the most illiterate scrub

woman in the land. Just try it yourself.

“We are all very proud of your success, dearest girl. Lucinda says she nearly drops every time Mis’ Hammond gits a letter from you; she’s dead sure it’s to say you’ve married a prince or the King of England, and that would just be her finish when you could have your pick of good solid American men without any handle to their names! I’m scribbling fast to get this off before the carrier comes, though I might go on forever.

“I suppose Alan has written about Genevieve. He is not well. Father says he works too hard; he can’t hold him back. And then we all think he has been troubled over Genevieve, though he is so reticent in some things we could only guess and wonder. Thee says he is almost jealous, father thinks so much of him.

“Ever thine,

“’LIZBETH.

“P.S. His name is Alexander, and you know all that his inferior namesake did! Well, this one is far ahead of that back number!”

"There's only Lucinda left to have a love affair!" Virginia thought, as she sat there too overcome to speak aloud.

"You must have had cheering news, you look so solemn!" Marcelle declared.

"It's only that I'm sort of dazed. Elizabeth Jordan is to marry a college professor. I don't know why she shouldn't, or why one is ever surprised over anybody's affairs of the heart, only I am. Well, if he doesn't get down on his knees to her every day I will know the reason why; Elizabeth is too dear to have her heart broken," Virginia declared fiercely. She took down her violin and began her daily practice, but all the time she told herself: "It's coming now, swift and sure. Why wasn't Elizabeth more explicit? But she doesn't think it necessary. Why should Alan be ill now of all times? Yet he never did know when to stop work. Well, Genevieve will care for him, but I don't believe she will like the city. I do hope Alan's letter will come soon. I detest suspense. If it must be, I want to know it beyond all doubt; then

perhaps, Jinny Hammond, you'll have shame or pride enough to cure yourself of your malady." But in her heart she knew that it was incurable. Like Miss Van Buren, she and her violin must go through life together, and, for the first time, the prospect did not satisfy her.

She and Marcelle were to take lunch with Aunt Henrietta and dinner with the de Thève-naus. Aunt Henrietta gave an unfamiliar number, asking them to stop for her there. When they arrived at a handsome house near her former apartment, a stately man servant in livery ushered them into a beautifully furnished room, where they were asked to wait. "Rather mysterious," Virginia said in an undertone.

Then Aunt Henrietta came in, wearing a wonderful creation of lavender and lace. "Ah, my dears," she said, "this is my new home. I wanted to surprise you, Virginia. It is really Alan Kingsbury's work. He certainly has a wonderful business turn. He and

Mr. Jordan invested well for me before, but this last deal is Alan's, and it has made me richer than ever before. And I want to say to you both that you must share it with me as long or whenever you're in Paris."

The girls explained that they were to leave for the Hague in a few days, but nothing would do but that they must come next day and stay till they left.

After an elegantly appointed lunch they went to the de Thèvenaus. Virginia was glad to learn that Heloise had gone with friends on a trip to Egypt.

"May she marry and stay there!" murmured Marcelle under her breath when Madame had left the room.

Virginia at once noticed the change in Madame de Thèvenau. Her marriage had already broadened her views and outlook on life. Her Philippe was the greatest and best man in the world. She wished, she said, that the Duc thought more as he did. He even refused to come to the wonderful concert given to help

the desire of Philippe's heart because his niece was to appear in public for money. "Philippe says my brother means well, but he is of the Middle Ages. He would be so much happier in the marriage state, but he says the women nowadays are gone mad; that he demands an outgrown, obsolete virtue in a wife, humility, the truly feminine."

Virginia noticed that for the first time Marcelle called Madame "Tante."

"I do not fear the dear girl any longer. She is an unusual creature, but at times she seems triste; is it not so, Virginia?" Madame asked with sympathy.

The two went to Mrs. Kirkland's, and, as Virginia said, were steeped in the lap of luxury until they left for the Hague. Before leaving, Aunt Henrietta made one of her little prepared speeches to her niece: "My dear Virginia, I am, I confess, amazed at your success. I fear we haven't always recognized your gift"—Aunt Henrietta used the "we" of royalty—"but I am very proud of you.

Now that I am once more on the top wave I shall be only too glad to launch you properly in society. There is no position that you might not aspire to; and, remember, that I am back of you always."

"You are very kind," Virginia replied, "and I appreciate it, but, dear Aunt Henrietta, I must work out my own salvation, I fear. I owe it to my violin."

Still no letter from Alan. Virginia alternately dreaded and longed for it. Then they were off for the Hague. The recitals were a success, but as the girls did not speak the language they found themselves rather awkward in spite of signs and the use of a timid and stupid interpreter. They decided to travel through Holland. They were tired, and Marcelle did not like Virginia's looks. She was at times as lively as ever, but often she was quiet and subdued, so unlike herself that her friend worried. Virginia made a great effort to put her trouble in the background.

"I wonder if poor Bertie and the Honorable

Mr. Fairfax felt as I do," she thought; "but men are different. They have so much outside; love is only an episode in their lives. Think how thoroughly Thee got over his fancy for me, though I suppose two years spell constancy to a mere man."

Virginia had written Captain Bertie soon after the concert. The letter was brief but to the point.

"You wrote once, my dear friend, that when the rival in the flesh appeared you would retire. He has come, and I feel that I must not delay acquainting you with the fact, much as I dislike wounding you. I blame myself for drifting into our present relationship. I am going to trust you, a man I so greatly respect, with my secret. I care for some one who neither cares nor will ever do so for me; but my eyes so long holden have been opened, and nobody else will ever satisfy me."

They were in a little Dutch village when his answer came.

"I cannot tell you, dear Miss Hammond, how your confidence touched me. I respect it and trust that some day the love may be yours, for I really care most of all for your happiness. Yet to me it seems incredible that any man knowing you should not put you above all women. Don't blame yourself. I overpersuaded you, and your goodness of heart made you yield. Never regret it. Your letters and interest have been to me in my journeyings the joy of life, and don't let yourself feel distracted over me, my dear friend. I suppose Time softens, if it doesn't heal, all wounds. I must take my medicine like a man.

"With the most earnest wishes for your happy future already so prophetic of success and fame,

"Yours as ever,

"ALBERT."

After reading this Virginia was very sober. "I shall miss his letters like everything. I wonder if a man and woman can ever have a

real close friendship without love on the part of one spoiling it. I thought Alan and I had proved that they could until now. Well, Alan will never know it, and I shall never allow another man to propose to me. It's too nerve-racking, even if he does get over it. I believe the only way, however, is to either grow old, die, enter a convent, or marry."

"Virginia," said Marcelle from her easy-chair, where she was writing letters, "I just remember reading somewhere that 'Often our souls need bitter tonics; hence misfortunes.' Do you think it's true?"

"Oh, I suppose so, but I wish my soul and yours never needed them; they're often so very bitter. I never could bear to take quinine!" Virginia said childishly.

"Yet think what we have! Two years ago, or even a year, we never dreamed of our success!"

"Marcelle, you are a tonic and you are not bitter to take. I'm ashamed of myself. I mean to brace up."

"I believe you are tired and homesick, Virginia. There's some good reason, for you are naturally brave and cheery."

"Well, I am often sick for home, I confess; but I hardly see my way to go for another year. Then, if our purses are fat, we'll be there as fast as steamer can carry us."

Virginia picked up a book, determined to get interested in it. She lay back on a couch, thankful that she need not hurry or work, just rest. Marcelle had gone into the next room. She was singing as she moved about. Virginia caught the words:

"But all the time the heart of me,
The better, sweeter part of me,
Was sobbin' for the robin
In the fields of Ballyclare!"

And then later on came the words in her clear enunciation:

"But ah, the Irish mind of me,
(I hope 'tis not unkind of me),
Is turnin' back with yearnin'
To the fields of Ballyclare!"

"Don't let us sight-see for a while; just let us go to little out of the way places," Virginia had begged.

They were at the town of Schoenhoven, and had a room and simple but good meals at the home of a Dutch peasant, a widow, Lisa Menorchen. Virginia was looking better and was evidently striving to enjoy life. Marcelle was cheerful outwardly, but Virginia sometimes could not bear the look in her eyes. She never spoke of Conrad Hensen.

"Trouble is making her a great soul," Virginia thought. "She is so sweet and patient. It goes to my heart, though, and I sometimes wish she would rail and cry and give way."

They had decided to walk through the village and out into the country. The children were playing on the streets, as they do always in Holland. Some one was calling behind them and the girls turned. A boy waved a paper. Both girls went white. Was it a harbinger of weal or woe?

It was addressed to Virginia, and, tearing it open, she read aloud:

“Alan very ill at my home. Come at once.

“HENRIETTA KIRKLAND.”

“Marcelle, I must go this minute,” Virginia said, her old alert self. “It has been delayed somehow.”

“Aren’t you going to take me, too?” Marcelle asked.

They joined hands like children and broke into a run. An hour later they were on the way Parisward.

“But, oh, it takes so long!” thought the girl. Then she prayed with all her heart that Alan would get well, or, if not, that she might not be too late.

There was much to think about on the way. Was Alan on his wedding trip? But if Genevieve were with him, why send for her? It was probably Aunt Henrietta who had sent the telegram and Alan knew nothing about it.

But why had he not written he was coming? She could not imagine Alan, the giant, ill. What could it be? Well, she would know in time. Meanwhile patience, courage.

CHAPTER XV.

ALAN

THE train seemed to Virginia to be moving at a snail's pace, then there was a delay of two hours. It was midnight when the girls reached Mrs. Kirkland's. Aunt Henrietta was up and waiting for them. She looked pale and old.

"He is very ill," she said. "I sent at once for my physician, Dr. Devereux, and then I became so frightened that I asked for consultation with Dr. de Thèvenau. I know that he is a surgeon and specialist, but he agreed to come for yours and Marcelle's sakes. Dr. Devereux was not only willing but eager to have him called, he is so up on everything. Alan is delirious all the time, and calls constantly for you. Both doctors and nurse hope that your presence may quiet him, or that your voice may

pierce his poor, tortured brain. Why, where are you going, child?"

"To Alan, of course; where is he?" The girl was already up the stairs, her hat and gloves off.

"To the right," her aunt called after her.

A moment more and she was in a large, plainly furnished room with a low, shaded light. The nurse silently led her to the bed. Virginia thought at first that the man lying there was a stranger; he was so changed from the big athletic fellow she knew so well.

"It's Virginia I want; I tell you I can't wait forever. I've tried to be fair, but it's too much to expect of a man. I just want to see her; I promise I won't say a word."

"I'm here, Alan; it's Virginia. I came as soon as I could," she said gently.

But he only babbled on. She sat beside him for an hour, trying every now and then to pierce his unconsciousness.

"It's no use, I fear," the nurse said regret-

fully. "Go and rest, Miss Hammond, and we'll try again to-morrow."

Virginia went to her room. Her aunt was asleep. Marcelle was awaiting her in the room adjoining.

"I thought you would like to hear what your aunt told me," she said. "The doctor, Doctor de Thèvenau, says he can hardly understand the breakdown in such a finely built, hearty man. It is overwork undoubtedly, but it's something more. He thinks it is worry kept to himself. He asked your aunt if she knew of any, and she said she hardly thought he had any troubles. He had come at once to see her, thinking you were here. He didn't look well, but his manner was just the same, that cordial, friendly way he has. They talked over business matters, and she gave him your Holland address. He said he would try and catch the train, though your aunt begged him to stay to lunch.

"He rose to go, then put his hand to his head, and staggered,

“ ‘I’ve had it several times,’ he said; ‘I can’t —’ And then he fell over on the floor.

“ Mrs. Kirkland was sure he was dead. She rang for the servants, sent for a nurse and doctor. He came to in a short time and asked them to take him to the hospital, but when Doctor de Thèvenau came he decided that he must not be moved. I never saw your aunt so interested, Virginia. She seems all upset over it.”

“ She is very kind, and feels that she owes Alan a great deal,” Virginia said in a spent voice.

“ You look so worn out, poor child,” Marcelle said; “ let me put you to bed. All will be better to-morrow.” She waited on her deftly, and after she was lying down massaged her head until she fell asleep.

The next day Virginia, in a cool white linen dress, stayed all day in the sickroom. Watching her capable ways and self-contained manner, the nurse even consented to slip away twice for an hour’s rest.

It was during the second of these absences that Virginia, praying earnestly but silently, knelt by Alan. He was quieter, but still wandering. She had the sense of immense distance between them, a wall of aloofness that all her efforts seemed futile to penetrate. Doctor Devereux had been there. "Don't give up," he encouraged her. "I have a conviction that his worry of mind has some connection with seeing you, and until he does —" he stopped abruptly but significantly. Virginia felt the importance of prompt measures. "Alan," she said slowly and distinctly, "you want me, Virginia. I am here. Look at me." He stirred uneasily. She repeated the words three times. His eyes opened.

"Yes, I've wanted you for years, Virginia," he said quietly. He looked at her with hungry eyes. "They told me you were away," he said wonderingly.

"I was, but I came back when I heard you were here."

His eyes held hers searchingly. What he

saw there was unmistakable. Virginia's heart was in her eyes now; it was too late for pride, for concealment. She was reckless.

Alan put out his arms. She put her head on his breast. She heard him draw in a great sobbing breath as he held her close.

"If I were only stronger! Virginia, is it possible that you care? It is worth the waiting," he murmured.

Virginia, with sudden recollection, withdrew herself from him.

"Genevieve! How could we forget, Alan?"

"Genevieve!" repeated the man in a dazed, weak voice. "What do you mean, Jinny?"

"She is your sweetheart. Have you forgotten?"

"I thought you knew." Alan's tone was puzzled. "She's to marry my old chum at the University, Malcolm Stuart. I thought I wrote you of the engagement, but it was only announced three or four weeks ago. I feared I'd never straighten it out, and they were both such good fellows and made for each other."

“It’s all right. I do understand now; don’t talk now, dear. I’m here to help you get well, and you must help all you can.”

“It seems absurd that I’m so helpless, Jinny, when I want so to be different. You are sure you won’t go away? If you will only stay I’ll soon be well. I never acted so before in all my life.”

He did not wait for her answer. Exhausted with his effort, he closed his eyes, put out his hand for her to take like a child, and in three minutes slept.

Virginia bent over him so that she could hold his hand easily. She was cramped and strained, but she felt nothing but joy. Alan loved her, had loved her for years, he said. How could it be? She could love him without shame now. He belonged to her: oh, the bliss of it!

Mademoiselle Pagnie, the nurse, came in softly. “I’m afraid I overslept,” she said. “You must be tired; let me relieve you.”

But Virginia shook her head. “He is all

right," she said triumphantly. That was all that mattered. The hours had passed when again Alan opened his eyes. He looked dazed for a moment, then he said: "It wasn't a dream after all, Jinny! But how tired you must be! What a brute I am to keep you this way!" He relinquished the hand.

"Virginia, say again those blessed words," he urged faintly.

"Will you go to sleep if I do?" bribed the girl.

The color flooded her face, but she ignored Mademoiselle's possible shock as she put her face close to Alan's and whispered the magical words. As if they were a potent charm, the man, weak as a child, dropped off to sleep.

When Virginia slipped off for lunch the nurse followed her.

"The crisis is over, I am sure. Monsieur le Docteur will be so relieved. It will be probably a tedious recovery, but if you will stay it is sure," she said in her pretty French.

"I shall stay," promised Virginia.

She went into the breakfast-room for lunch. Aunt Henrietta and Marcelle were awaiting her. At sight of her face Aunt Henrietta began to cry.

"He will get well, I know; he is himself," she said. "You look so happy, Virginia."

"I am happy," the girl said. "Alan is better, but he is not well. I must be with him constantly. Dear Aunt Henrietta, I want to be married very soon. Will you and Marcelle manage it for me?"

"Certainly we shall," Marcelle declared in her strong, decided voice. She had come over to the Violin Lady's side. "I am so glad, Virginia dear," she said.

"You can understand," murmured the girl.

Aunt Henrietta stood there astounded. Her lips parted as if to dissuade her; then she said quietly instead: "You dear child, you must eat something. I shall ring for coffee."

Immediately after lunch Virginia went to the telephone.

"This is Virginia Hammond, Doctor de

Thèvenau," she said. "Mr. Kingsbury is perfectly himself, but very weak. Do you think he will be able to be married to-morrow?"

"Better wait a few days; we don't want him to retrograde."

"So that is what you call marriage, is it? I shall tell your wife."

"Well, it depends so much on whom the other person is; may I inquire who is the woman to be given to this man?"

"*C'est moi*," said a very small voice.

"He is far too weak to talk; some one must have asked him; perhaps it is forced marriage. *Don't* tell my wife; she is sure the suffragists will soon vote for women to do all the proposing, and it shocks her dreadfully."

"It's worse than that. Alan doesn't know it yet until I tell him."

"Well, the very earliest I can allow is Monday; and I can promise one thing, he won't run away."

Virginia came into the sickroom. As the nurse went out the door she said to the man

watching her, "Alan, will you marry me on Monday morning?"

"What?"

"Marry me Monday morning; don't turn me down. You don't look at all happy over it."

"You darling! I heard once that you said if you ever married it must be in St. Margaret's, and think of the difference."

"Then you refuse?"

"Virginia, why do you stay so far away, just as if you were going to run off?"

She came nearer.

"You used to kiss me a long time ago."

"You were so ill you had to be indulged."

"I'm much worse now."

"Alan! really?" Virginia bent over him anxiously to feel his pulse.

He pulled her down and kissed her not once, but many times.

"You're a fraud. I'm sure you are better now. I shan't worry over you any more. You're stronger than you seem."

"If you could only half realize how long I've been starved! If you could only know what I've been through making myself stay away all this time!"

"Why did you do it?"

"Because I wanted so to be fair. Your dear mother was so kind to a boy who had no love, no care, no real home. I made a vow I would never forget it. I knew that your heart was set on carrying out your cherished plan to be a fine violinist, and I was determined that I would not lay a straw in the way of doing what you and your mother would wish you to do. I determined that you should go out into the world free from any binding vows. I intended waiting longer, but my vision was too much for my will. Then I perhaps flattered myself unduly that I understood you at least in part, and I felt sure that you were not ready. Honestly, Jinny, if I had come at Easter, over a year ago, when I intended, would you have loved me or married me?"

"No, I wouldn't, Alan. I seem to have had to come to it my own way."

"I was sure you would refuse me; but I wanted you so intensely that I dared not trust myself to see you and keep silent. Then when I read the accounts of your unusual success, while I glowed with pride it seemed to put you so far away. What was I to court a famous woman like you? What had I to offer in return? Then I heard that you were to marry high in the social world, and I was . . . well, very low in my mind. And then, Jinny, I had such a strange experience I hesitate to tell even you. It was the night of the grand concert. I was thinking of you, and trying to see you in my mind's eye playing to that immense listening throng, when all at once I saw you as plainly as I see you now. You were in white, with something pink over your dress, and you held your violin. Then, as I watched you, fascinated, you deliberately laid it down and stretched your arms out towards me. Your eyes looked as they did the other day when I

knew, and you cried out: 'Take me, Alan; I want you so.' Then you were gone. But I could not sleep. Mr. Jordan wanted some business attended to abroad, but he felt that I wasn't well enough yet to go, but I insisted. Usually I can, as you used to say, hustle, but everything seemed to drag, and the boat was so slow. I told myself I must not spoil things, that I must be sure; and then everything was turned about and I wondered if I were to see you at all again. When I did I thought at first I had died and it was heaven; and when I read your dear, tell-tale eyes I was sure of it."

Then Virginia told him of her experience that night on the stage.

They were silent after that. Sometimes people are too happy and absorbed to talk.

"Virginia Hammond," Alan said at last, "did I dream we are to be married Monday?"

"If it is my lord's will."

"I want it so much that I fear to yield. You are so generous and prodigal of your favors



“SOMETIMES PEOPLE ARE TOO HAPPY AND ABSORBED TO TALK”

I keep telling myself that I mustn't take an undue advantage. I feel, dear, so unworthy —"

"Alan, I didn't think you'd make me ask again."

"Jinny, I want to be married this very afternoon. I can't wait till Monday."

"The doctor won't allow it, and, if you talk any more, Mademoiselle Pagnie will forbid me the room, and we shan't be married at all."

"I'd like to see her."

But Virginia took up a book and pretended to read. The stillness was perfect. In five minutes Alan slept.

"Poor boy, he is so weak! I must not let him talk so much," thought Virginia.

She kept to her resolution all next day, but Saturday he seemed so much stronger that he demanded more. He could hardly wait until the nurse was gone.

"I've been thinking, dear, of how strangely you spoke of Genevieve Black, just as if you thought we were lovers — did you ever think that?"

"I certainly did, and so did the Jordans. You went there instead of coming here after you had promised, you seemed so very fond of her, you admired her,—no wonder I thought so."

"I had always wanted a sister," Alan began; "I used to think of you like that, but when I went to Carlisle I knew that I could never look upon you that way again. Then I found out quite by accident that my chum, Malcolm Stuart, was quite mad about Genevieve, but there was a serious misunderstanding between them. They're both as proud as Lucifer, and it seemed to me that things were never coming out straight. But I happened on the right track with Genevieve once, and at last they are engaged. It was only announced six weeks ago, and I was sure I had written it to you. They are to be married in the fall. I little thought when I congratulated them that I would get ahead of them. Jinny, Genevieve is a mighty fine girl."

Virginia smiled indulgently. "Alan, I'm

sure she is; and I'm beginning to suspect that I've been a horrid little beast and been jealous of her from the first."

"I can never believe that; it is too absurd. She is the only one I ever talked to of you. She tried to put hope into me when I was down. She was a good chum."

"I know she thought I wasn't half worthy of you; well, I'm not."

"Look here, Jinny, I am quite weak and no 'count, but I don't allow any one to talk that way of you."

"Don't excite yourself, little boy. Did you ever meet Professor Canfield?"

"Once. He's the 'foine gintleman,' as the Flahertys would say. He has brains, yet he's just like folks to talk to, and perhaps he isn't in love all right!"

"He ought to be," Virginia said severely. "Elizabeth Jordans don't grow on every tree."

"I wonder," said Alan wheedlingly, "if you would do a big thing for me now, this hour?"

"You frighten me; don't keep me in suspense."

"I want you to get my long-time rival, your little fiddle, and play for me."

"Just as soon as Mademoiselle comes. I might disturb her and Aunt Henrietta's naps sooner."

Later she played all the numbers that she had played at the big Parisian concert, including her own three compositions.

Alan lay there watching her and listening with kindling eyes. He did not speak for a few minutes after she ended with "The Conqueror."

"I realize now as I never did before that you are indeed the Violin Lady," he said; then soberly, "You're a real live genius, not the little Jinny Hammond I know. I shan't be married Monday; I'm afraid."

That night as Virginia was undressing — Marcelle was staying the week-end with the de Thevénaus — Aunt Henrietta came in. She was evidently troubled. "My dear," she be-

gan abruptly, "I've come to confess. It's about Alan. You see, while I always liked him I didn't want you to marry him, and I've felt for some time that he cared for you. But my heart was set on your making a brilliant match, especially since I heard of your success in London. So awhile ago, when I wrote him a business letter, I added that you were becoming so famous I was sure from all the rumors that you were to marry rank and position, and that I should do everything possible to encourage it; that I couldn't face the alternative of your being buried in America. I have been afraid since Alan was so ill that I might have hurt him or misled him."

"Don't bother, Aunt Henrietta, I am too happy and grateful to-night to care for anything but Alan."

"He's a dear fellow, and I feel now that he's even good enough for you, a Leighton. Good night."

As Virginia told her lover, he could not ask anything more of Aunt Henrietta than that.

Sunday Alan seemed so much better and more like himself the doctor was delighted. When the two were alone, he said, "I'm so ashamed to think that I've never mentioned the death of Aunt Deb and Uncle, Jinny."

"Ma spoke of it in her last letter, saying she had written details before but the letter miscarried," Virginia explained.

"They died in May: Aunt Deb of pneumonia and Uncle two weeks later of heart trouble. He seemed dazed after she was gone and didn't know how to live without her. I don't believe it was love so much as habit. I was so surprised to find that Aunt Deb, much as she disapproved of me, left me everything. She was very well off, over a hundred thousand. I put most of it in the business as junior partner — Mr. Jordan had arranged that I should go in before I dreamed of the legacy, but of course this gives me a larger share — and now the firm is Jordan & Kingsbury. I told Elizabeth not to tell you, I wanted to surprise you. Jinny, let us make the income of her money as

well as our own help others. I can't bear to think of all that Aunt Deb missed and of all the beautiful things she might have done!"

"And that reminds me, Alan," Virginia said earnestly, "it never suited my ideas of things that when people marry they should receive everything; they already have so much. I want to give on our wedding day. You remember the Lauderdales, the missionary and his wife out West who are doing a good work so simply? Well, Marcelle and I want to send them a big check to-morrow for their work and part for themselves."

"Let me help," begged Alan. "And let us endow two beds in the doctor's new hospital for children. I'd like to think that some poor kids who are ill or injured might have a chance through us to get well and strong."

"Alan, you are so dear," Virginia declared; "that makes me so happy."

The man took her hand in his thin ones — Virginia remembered with a pang the vigorous clasp of the Alan of old. "Jinny," he said,

“my happiness overwhelms me. I feel that I must let it overflow to others or I couldn’t bear it.”

When Virginia left him early in the evening he whispered: “Pray that to-morrow may come soon, dear.”

The service was to be promptly at ten. Marcelle had laid out Virginia’s cream lace dress and had bought some orange blossoms for her hair and corsage. Marcelle was in white.

“You have been such a comfort,” Virginia said. “You think and do where others talk.”

Marcelle had seen to everything; the doctor had bought the ring, license and daintiest silk attire for the patient. Virginia thought he had never looked so fine and handsome. The rector — Mr. Ellsworth — who knew Virginia, stood by the bed in his vestments. Aunt Henrietta and the de Thèvenaus were there. Virginia stepped quietly to the bedside, standing during the solemn service. She knelt, Alan’s hand clasped in hers, for the benediction. It was all quiet, impressive, and the tears came to

the eyes of the few who witnessed it. They all slipped away after a few words to the two chief actors, and Alan and the girl of his heart were alone. The man's eyes shone with happiness.

"He has 'the look,'" Virginia thought, unaware that her own face was so illuminated that Alan felt almost dazzled as he gazed.

"You beautiful thing!" he cried. "Tell me again that you are mine, for I can't believe it. I fear it's one of my dreams. Virginia, may God never forgive me if I fail to make good as your lover, your husband."

"You've made good in all else; I'm not afraid of failure now. That is the test, Alan, one's life, one's self. Why don't you fear for me? I'm very human and faulty," his wife assured him.

They sat there until the nurse came back in an hour, which they were certain had been but a few moments.

Aunt Henrietta gave them exquisite linens and a quaint silver bowl; the de Thèvenaus a

fine old painting; Marcelle a lovely brooch for the Violin Lady. But the greatest gift of all for the bride was when Doctor de Thèvenau told her that evening that they considered the danger over and that with care Alan would be well in a few weeks at most.

CHAPTER XVI

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

IT was two weeks after the wedding. From the hour of the marriage Alan made rapid strides towards recovery. He loved to have Virginia sit by him with her work, or reading aloud to him. He told her he had dreamed of her so often in their home sitting opposite him with her needlework.

Virginia laughed. "Alan, I shall have to fess up that I don't like to sew one little bit. It is too bad to spoil your dream. I don't much mind hemming though, so I've begun on some napkins for our home furnishing."

"The doctor thinks that we can go off on our wedding trip in a week by easy stages, and I want you to make out our itinerary, Jinny," Alan urged, ignoring the sewing episode.

"Oh, let us go leisurely through Great

Britain and Ireland," Virginia said. "I didn't see half; it will be lovely to enjoy it together."

"I want to talk with you too, Virginia, about your profession. You know me well enough to be sure that I am as anxious as you for you to keep on with your work. There will be many times when you can go on brief trips in our country and others; and thank heaven! I can arrange things so you can have leisure for practice and the creations of your mind. I can now enjoy my ancient rival and afford to be generous, for I have come out on top."

"And I, too, want to say something," Virginia declared earnestly. "I shall be glad and anxious not to give up my violin playing in public and above all my creative work, but I feel now, Alan, that other things come before even that. I long for a home; I want, in time, to have children; I want above all things to be your helpmeet and comrade. I can't picture myself indifferent to my beloved fiddle ever,

but now I can think of but one thing: for you to get well."

Virginia had a note from Camondreau which pained and hurt her keenly, which read as follows:

"My dear Madame Kingsbury:

"I learn through our mutual friend, Dr. de Thèvenau, of your marriage and renouncing of all our plans for the coming year. I know what that means: that your career is over. Brief as a summer's day, it is gone never to return. It has been a blow to me that you can never even faintly comprehend. I have placed all my faith on you to keep my memory green. You, my favorite pupil, have deserted me. Do you not think that you are bound by every idea of honor and obligation to sacrifice yourself to your art? What is mere personal happiness to such a career as the future promises you? I cannot see you or hear from you. You have broken my old heart.

"CAMONDREAU."

Virginia went to see him at once, but he refused to meet her. She wrote him, but he returned her letter unopened.

"You can do nothing more except to let the future show that while you may still place your domestic ties first, you can do both. How many do!" Alan exclaimed.

In these days of happiness Virginia's heart ached for Marcelle, who had gone to Nancy to sing quite unexpectedly for the de Thèvan-aus. She wanted to see her before sailing. It seemed almost wicked to be so blissful when Marcelle had lost so much.

"Alan, do you care very much to travel in Great Britain?" Virginia asked suddenly one day, as they were out in Aunt Henrietta's new car.

"I thought you wanted the trip," Alan evaded.

"Because, if it would not be a great disappointment, I would so much rather go home as soon as possible," Virginia hurried on, looking at her husband anxiously as she spoke.

"Are you sure?" Alan asked. Virginia's keen eyes saw with relief a gleam of joy in his as she nodded an affirmative with energy.

"The doctor told me that a sea voyage would finish my cure, but I would not let him hint it to you; and—I suppose you will think me dreadfully silly—I want to take you home with me now. I want to be sure it is not a dream: I want to show you off to my friends: I long to select or build a home," Alan's words rushed forth impulsively. "I am so proud of you, Jinny," he went on, "I am simply hilarious, and I long to be among our own friends. I feel like a boy with his first watch, as if I must hold you up to every one's view and say: 'Look at her, you poor unfortunate creatures; she's mine, hands off!'"

"And they will be so relieved that I am yours they will be saying: 'I would not be the husband of a player woman for worlds, and have to eat her heavy biscuits, soggy pies and burnt meat!'" Virginia retorted laughing. "But, oh, Alan, I am so glad to know that we can sail

for home! I would like to start this minute. I long for home and my home people! I thought you ought to have the other trip, but it did seem as if I had been away such an age! The old countries are full of interest and wonderful gifts of the past, and I have met lovely people, but, after all, one craves one's own, one's country, one's family, one's home. I want to swing in the hammock on the back porch at the farm; I dream of Ma, Father, the children, the Jordans and the McPhersons, and all the rest, and there is old Lucinda. Why couldn't we see them and then take a trip in our own land? I've been about so little there."

Alan's face brightened. "It would suit me, dearest, and later we can come back here. We'll engage passage at once on the *Oceanic*."

Three days later they sailed from Havre.

After they were well out at sea Alan and Virginia went on deck. A woman sat comfortably in a steamer chair talking to a man of unusually distinguished appearance. Virginia felt that she was taking leave of her senses.

Her husband looked at her in surprise as she left him and hurried forward.

"Marcelle!" she cried incredulously. As if in a dream she saw her friend come to meet her.

"We wanted to surprise you. You have met Dr. Hensen," Marcelle said in a matter-of-fact tone.

The men went off for a smoke, and Marcelle, her face with "the look" again on it, was saying: "A telegram forwarded from Paris was handed to me before I sang my second song at Nancy. It read:

" 'Meet me at Havre. All is well.

" 'CONRAD.'

You can imagine my feelings, Virginia. I thought I would never reach the coast. At Havre I met Conrad at the station. 'Gerda is dead,' he began at once, after greeting me. 'It was very sudden, the breaking of a blood vessel on the brain. Marcelle, I try to forget everything except that she was ill in body and

mind, perhaps long before we knew it. Poor girl! would that I might have borne at least some of her suffering!' It was the only time he ever alluded to his unhappiness, and I would not have understood then if his aunt had not enlightened me earlier. He went on to tell me of his return to Berlin.

"He decided to carry out his plan of going to America; but he could not go on without me. He said he felt sure I wouldn't fail him. He engaged passage for us both and telegraphed me. He had found you were booked on the *Oceanic* and he felt that you would be both a protection and pleasure. We are to be married soon. Virginia, I can't believe it is true. Perhaps Ma will let me be married at your home. I want the very simplest of weddings."

"You could not please her better, and Lucinda will make you the best things to eat. Marcelle, I, too, can't believe it. All through these past weeks with Alan I could not forget your trouble. And now to think when I feared it would last for years, it is over."

In their stateroom later Alan was saying: "Dr. Hensen is above the ordinary, Jinny. He told me only something of his story, but I could read much between the lines. He feels as I do about you and Miss Le Duc going on with your career. He does not see why you cannot do a great deal still, even if you are hampered with husbands."

"I'm rather surprised," Virginia replied; "I tease Marcelle about marrying a foreigner when she has always declared that she could not marry any one but an American, and she says logically: 'He is not a foreigner; he's a man and my lover.' Marcelle and I have been so closely related we are very near and dear to each other. It would have quite broken my heart if her life had been saddened by the cloud that hung over it. Oh, Alan, how we are cared for and led! Marcelle has always declared that she was not at all religious, but she said to me to-night: 'I've tried to think it was all right as Conrad said. If it had dragged on for years I might have been rebellious, but I

feel now that my — our — times are in Higher Hands. Perhaps some day I may reach Conrad's height.' ”

What Virginia did not say aloud she thought; it was: “Why must any one be unhappy? How I shall rejoice when I receive the announcement of the marriage of the gallant Captain and the Honorable Mr. Fairfax!”

The voyage was delightful. Alan said he wished it would last forever.

“You think so now, but oh! how wretched you would be after a few months, or even weeks of it!” Virginia exclaimed.

“Mrs. Kingsbury, you're entirely too analytical.”

“I'm too happy to be anything so formidable,” retorted Virginia. “The two things lacking will soon be supplied: Marcelle's marriage, and seeing all the home people. Do you think, Alan, if trouble comes, I shall be so ungrateful as to forget this time in our lives?”

“I hope I shall not,” Alan said thoughtfully. “Jinny, I can hardly wait to go about selecting

or building our home! After our visit to the farm, and trip, we'll go to a hotel and stay until our house is ready to step into. If you just knew how I have longed for a home! And next year we must have Bob with us to attend the Technical School, and the next year Janet must go to Miss Kemble's."

"You think of everything. I've been planning your den and the dining-room. It will be such fun choosing things. I always loved to as a child, but then they materialized only in make-believes; this time they'll be real. Alan, I feel so meek and subdued I believe even the Duc would be willing to marry me if I were of the inner circle! . . . and free."

It was decided that Marcelle was to go directly to the farm with Alan and Virginia, Dr. Hensen staying in New York with a fellow-patriot to arrange his future in a new country.

"What a fortunate thing it is that Doctor de Thèvenau invested my money in America several months ago!" Marcelle informed Virginia. They were on deck; the men, who

seemed very congenial, were enjoying a tramp and smoke.

"Everything's fortunate," Virginia declared; "even 'The Conqueror' bids fair to be famous. It has been arranged for an orchestra. I wish I might hear it; it would be very effective with the different instruments. I shall do better work after I settle down in Carlisle. They say sorrow is the best incentive to creative work, but I mean to show that joy and happiness are better."

"My great disappointment in my work has been that I have no histrionic talent and so could never sing in opera," Marcelle confessed; "but now I don't care at all. I hope, Virginia, our future work will be together. I could not do as well with any one else."

So the two talked on, planning for the future, but it was noticeable that it was more of their homes and married life than of their art.

The home-coming was all that Virginia had pictured it. Ma, in a new white gown, ran down the walk to meet them, Mr. Hammond

and the children at her heels. For a few minutes there was Bedlam broken loose, Mr. Hammond said.

"Ma, I never knew you were beautiful before!" cried Virginia fervently, as she gazed on at the beaming face of her stepmother. "And Bob is so tall and straight, and Janet such a big girl! Oh, I'm just blissful; I can't stand another drop! Where's Lucinda?"

"She's waiting," Janet said.

There she was standing on the porch wiping her eyes.

"I never thought I'd see you agin, Jinny; don't, *don't* go over to the Dark Ages any more," she begged, her mind rather mixed but her heart all right.

Virginia went about admiring the new improvements, the pretty furnishings of the bedrooms, the new parlor rug, the dining-room paper.

Marcelle was made to feel at home at once. That was one of Ma's homely but not common gifts. Lucinda's supper was wonderful, and

the appetites of the newcomers satisfied even her. Marcelle, Virginia and Alan had brought gifts for everybody "just like Christmas," Janet said, while Alan and Bob went off in a corner to talk over some long coveted wireless properties and photograph outfits Alan was to order.

They all had so much to talk over as they sat on the big piazza day after day. Alan and Mr. Hammond laughed at the women, but Virginia said she noticed they hung around a great deal and liked to listen. Virginia played to an audience not critical or learned, but so overflowing with pride and love that her heart sang. Marcelle filled the home with her beautiful voice. She had set a little poem of Charles Hanson Towne's called "Constancy" to a beautiful air. Virginia liked it especially for it reminded her of Alan.

"There is a love that perishes; and one
That shall outlast the glory of the sun,
Be mine the steadfast love that throbs each hour,
Nor wastes its beauty like some heedless flower.

"Be mine the quiet service through all days,
Serene and well content in hidden ways,
Not that wild passion of a spendthrift June,
Wasted in ashes at Life's golden noon."

The Jordans and Professor Canfield came up for a week with the McPhersons. Checks and gifts poured in for the married pair. Elizabeth was the same as ever, eager to have her lover and best friend meet. Virginia and Alan were to take a trip the following week to California, stopping at the Blacks and the Theodore Jordans on the way; then back in time for Elizabeth's wedding at St. Margaret's where Virginia was to be matron of honor, and Miss Van Buren had written to say she was hurrying home to attend it.

Marcelle and the doctor were to be married in early October, and Ma would not hear to it being anywhere but at the farm. She planned things with the girl with her usual zest.

"I was cheated out of Virginia's wedding, but I shall not be denied yours," she declared.

"Lucinda's got a new fad," Bob informed

his sister; "she bought a book full of all kinds of wisdom and she just hurls it at everybody. I should worry."

They all had their share of the shot. "We are handy targets," Marcelle declared laughingly. Once when Virginia exclaimed: "Isn't everything lovely? I wish we might have sunshine forever," quickly came Lucinda's reproof from her book: "All sunshine makes a desert; better put up with some rain."

When Bob informed the family at dinner that he intended being an inventor, Lucinda, who was passing the hot corn meal gems, remarked: "Necessity is a bad bargainer but a good inventor."

"How you've improved your farm, Father Hammond," Alan observed one day. And Lucinda, from sheer force of habit, murmured: "A wise man don't wive till his father-in-law thrive." Alan threw back his head and laughed long and heartily.

Marcelle was walking about the lawn back

of the house when Lucinda ran out of the kitchen and pulled her towards the house.

“Don’t you see the ladder?” she demanded.

“What harm is a ladder?” Marcelle asked, surprised.

“Never pass under a ladder or no wedding bells this year,” said Lucinda solemnly.

Mr. Hammond no sooner sneezed than quickly came Lucinda’s: “Sneeze to the right, happy sign; sneeze to the left, not so fine.”

“She has such an open, frank countenance,” Marcelle said to Alan one day in regard to Ma.

“My book says,” Lucinda, who was near, declared, “that an open countenance catches more flies than vinegar.”

“I’m glad, Alan, that your aunt left you all her money,” she said, “but don’t get eaten up with it. Remember, ‘there’s no lime juice to quench the thirst for riches.’”

“I hope you ain’t forgot to cook, Jinny,” quoth Lucinda, “for ‘Blind love finds a way to the window when the cookery’s bad.’”

"There's a menace for you, Alan," his wife called to him gleefully. "I shan't have any windows to our home."

"I hate drudgery," Marcelle said one day.

"Drudgery," said the family oracle, "is the gray angel of success."

Bob was always losing things. He was hunting madly for his knife and gave excuses for leaving it about so much. "Excuses are the only things always easy to find when you're lookin' for 'em," Lucinda remarked calmly.

"Alan," she said before he left, "don't idle too long. 'He that neither works nor pushes will find no food upon his bushes.'"

"That's true; I shall go to work, Lucinda," Alan assured her gravely.

"Jinny," she said, as she helped her pack, "I'm awful glad you married Alan; he ain't so pretty as Mr. Theodore, but his face makes a body feel as how they'd be willin' to give him most anything they liked awful well, even their own child, 'cause they'd be sure he'd keep it fur 'em if he died fur it." Lucinda folded up

a skirt. "And from the back he certainly is handsomer'n Mr. Theodore," she went on; "he's so big and straight and well set. Jinny, I've hed a lot o' worryin' over you, but, after all, you've come out all right. If you'll only settle down and stay put!"

As the door closed on her parting words, Marcelle, who had quietly entered the room a few minutes before, and had been enjoying Lucinda's remarks, said: "Virginia, I've just had a letter from Conrad; he has secured a fine position at a New York hospital. He urges me to be married at once, but I want to wait till the time set. It hardly seems fair anyhow to the other woman."

Virginia did not agree with her, but she said nothing. "Marcelle," she announced suddenly, "I'm bound to make Genevieve Black like me or die in the attempt!"

Marcelle laughed. "Virginia, you are a funny girl, oh, such a *quare* critter, but thank heaven, Alan can manage you!"

Virginia flashed a look at her friend from

her dancing eyes as she put in her last trunk tray. "He doesn't think of managing me, but I have been taught by Lucinda that it's the wife's duty to do all things possible to please her lord!" she stated primly; then, "Joking aside, Marcelle," she said earnestly, "Alan has always understood me, sometimes better than I have myself. He is the only man in the world for me, the only one I could ever have put before my violin, 'once the sole master of my heart.'"

THE END

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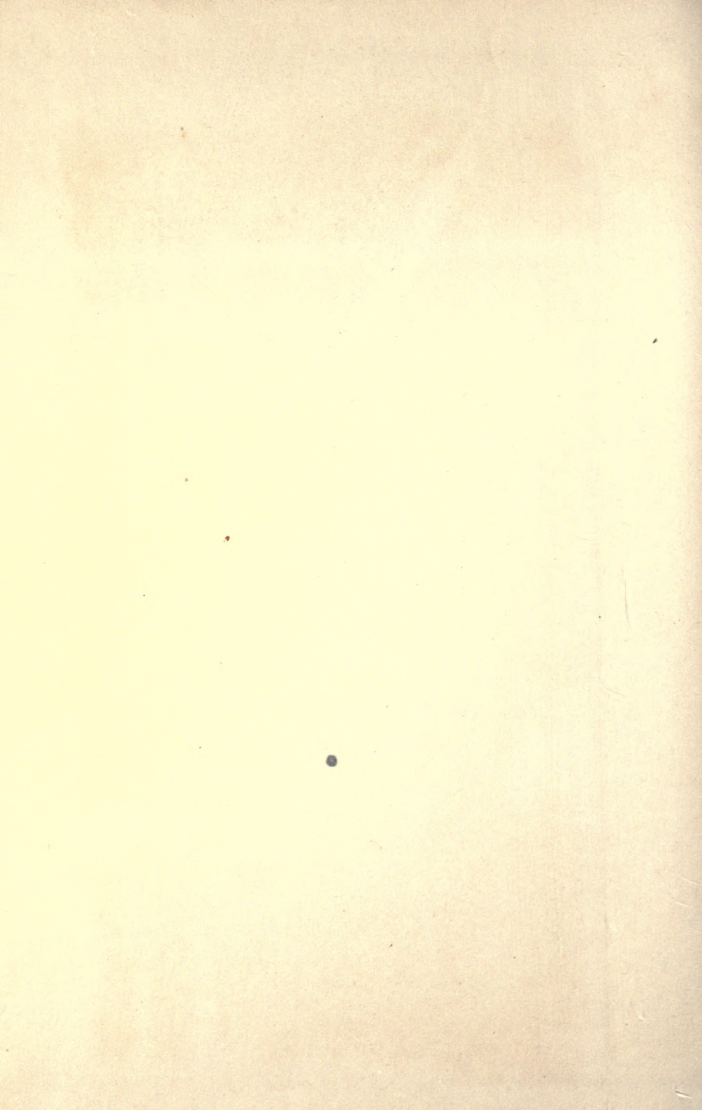
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